DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 154 410 CS 204 139

AUTHOR	Stewig, John Warren; Sebesta, Sam L.
TITLE	Using Literature in the Elementary Classroom.
INSTITUTION	National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Ill.
PUB DATE	78
NOTE	80p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801 (Stock No. 56177, $3.50 member, $3.95 non-member)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$4.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Childrens Books; *Childrens Literature; Creative Dramatics; Elementary Education; Illustrations; Instructional Materials; Language Arts; Linguistics; *Reading Comprehension; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Skills; *Teaching Techniques; Vocabulary; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS	Picture Books; Trade Books

ABSTRACT

The six authors of this monograph draw from their experience in elementary education in proposing practical techniques for using literature to teach a variety of literacy skills to children. The following topics are developed individually: reading for learning about the nature of language, picture books for reading vocabulary, the trade book as an instructional tool-strategies in approaching literature, book illustration as a key to visual and verbal literacy, reading as leading to writing, and enhancing reading comprehension through creative dramatics. The topics are linked together by the authors' common philosophy regarding the use of the books with children and by the use of headnotes that relate each article to the preceding one. Lists of appropriate children's books are included in several of the articles and a complete bibliography accompanies each topic. (MAI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED154410

Using Literature in the Elementary Classroom

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Edited by

John Warren Stewig
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Sam L. Sebesta
University of Washington

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
National Council of Teachers of English
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

C S28 4 139

NCTE Editorial Board: Evelyn Copeland, Rudine Sims, Donald C. Stewart, Ann Terry, Frank Zidonis, Robert F. Hogan, *ex officio*, Paul O'Dea, *ex officio*

Staff Editor: Elaine Dawley

Book Design: Tom Kovacs

NCTE Stock Number 56177

Copyright © 1978 by the National Council of Teachers of English.
All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

It is the policy of NCTE in its journals and other publications to provide a forum for the open discussion of ideas concerning the content and the teaching of English and language arts. Publicity accorded to any particular point of view does not imply endorsement by the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, or the membership at large, except in announcements of policy, where such endorsement is clearly specified.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Using literature in the elementary classroom.

Includes bibliographies.
1. Literature—Study and teaching (Elementary)
I. Stewig, John W. II. Sebesta, Sam Leaton.
LB1575.U83 372.6'4 78-9273
ISBN 0-8141-5617-7

Contents

Preface vii

Introduction xi

1. Reading to Learn about the Nature of Language 1
   A. Barbara Pilon
2. Using Picture Books for Reading Vocabulary Development 13
   Alden J. Moe
3. The Tradebook as an Instructional Tool: Strategies in Approaching Literature 21
   Helen Felsenthal
4. Book Illustration: Key to Visual and Verbal Literacy 35
   John Warren Stewig
5. Reading Leads to Writing 51
   Richard Kolczynski
6. Reading Comprehension through Creative Dramatics 63
   Mary Jett-Simpson

Contributors 72

4

Preface

The articles in this volume vary in topic but not intent. Their intent is to show the *what*, *how*, and *why* of tradebooks, as these may be used to develop skills of reading and the other language arts. A premise behind these articles is that tradebooks have a place in the educative process.

While many teachers will accept this premise, some may see in it the roots of controversy. One side of the controversy is this: should tradebooks be "used" for anything other than free reading, delight, and information? As literature, they exemplify sensitive use of language—but should they be used to *teach* sensitive use of language? By definition, tradebooks are not textbooks. Textbooks, presumably based on knowledge of the scope and sequence of skills needed for language production and reception, are designed for teaching. Should textbooks, not tradebooks, be the sole material for teaching?

The other side of the controversy is that language skills are best taught through examples of good literature. Tradebooks with high literary quality might be deemed the best material for teaching those skills.

I am glad that the authors of these articles do not enter that arena of controversy. They do not debate the issue of tradebooks versus textbooks. No one has claimed that textbooks are based on a false sequence or that they contain inferior literature. No one has insisted that tradebooks should revolutionize the educative process. The authors do not suggest, for example, that we get rid of the verb "teach" in favor of a totally free curriculum. Nor do they presume to build a new scope and sequence for the language arts, spiral or hierarchical, derived from tradebooks and literary theory. Instead, their goals and suggestions for implementing these goals are modest and realistic. These teachers like literature. They like to use it in the classroom. They have had good results—and they tell us how they got them. They have some reasons for believing that literature achieves some of the skills learnings connected with language, while achieving a main effect, which is intrinsic motivation. There is sanity in this position.

The chapters contain implicit advice for the teacher who would enrich or implement objective-based instruction in reading/language

arts programs with tradebooks. Behind the writers' lengthy sets of examples is a tremendous regard for *selection*. All books are not equal. This has become especially apparent in the juvenile tradebook field at a time when over 2200 new titles are published annually in the United States.[1] It is not enough that a book exemplifies a particular skill—for instance, that it illustrates problem solving or complex sentences of word play. To be used intensively, it must be a good book. It must be done with inspiration, content worth communicating, and craft. The books cited in these articles are generally examples not only of books with particular skills-teaching possibilities but with intrinsic worth as literature.

The need for breadth in selection is apparent, too. I am glad to see that nonfiction is included. The term is an unfortunate one—"not fiction"—and the type is sometimes thought to be inferior to the literature of fiction or poetry. But children do not accept such a disclaimer. We are beginning to see that the skills for understanding and appreciating nonfiction are best taught not through stories but through nonfiction works themselves. Hence the need for broadening the field by examining nonfiction skills in a volume such as this is evidence of wisdom.

Another implicit lesson to be learned from reading these articles is the importance of *specificity*. All activities are not equal in regard to all books. A general list of activities or questions for eliciting comprehension cannot be applied to any work that comes along, even to all good works. For example, one should not list "dramatize the story" as a suitable activity until one has heard the story, considered whether dramatization is appropriate to the tone and theme of the story, and thought over what may be achieved through dramatization. Note, then, that the authors give us specific activities and questions applied to specific works. Their suggestion is clear: that a teacher must know the skills and know the books before attempting to match the two for instruction. What is more, they have given us plentiful examples of how this is to be done.

There is nothing gimmicky in these articles, and no short-cuts are suggested. The challenge is that, to teach language and reading skills through literature, we must ourselves be sensitive to language and to literature. Our teaching should encompass the theme and tone of a literary work, while using it to develop skills in keeping with its content and expression. Beside this challenge, the questions of sources, whether tradebooks or textbooks, or of arrangement of skills, whether spiral or hierarchical, seem less important. As these authors' comments

and examples make clear, the real challenge is that we know, love, and understand literature and use our utmost ingenuity to develop the skills of living language.

Sam L. Sebesta

---

1. Figures for 1976 from *Bowker Annual of Library and Trade Book Information* (ed. by Glick and Prakken). New York: R. R. Bowker, 1977, p. 321.

Introduction

The uses of literature are as multiple as the forms of literature itself. In this monograph, a varied group of authors has considered the question: How can literature for children be used to develop a variety of literacy skills?

Literacy has been succinctly defined as the ability to read. The new attention to literacy skills shows a wider definition, however, related to the meaning of literate:

> having or showing knowledge of literature, writing . . . well-read . . . characterized by skill, lucidity . . . a person who can read and write. (*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*. N. Y.: Random House, 1967.)

Instruction in basic functional reading skills is well developed and highly systematized. Nonetheless, there is a growing feeling that to be truly literate necessitates more than such foundational skill.

This book had its origin at the 1976 Anaheim Convention of the International Reading Association, where all the contributors were program participants. The authors are a diverse group; they come from different backgrounds, yet share a common belief that literature can be used to help children develop the literacy skills so necessary to survival in today's complex world. Many people have devoted themselves to helping children develop such skills; the concern is not new, though some of the techniques of achieving the goal are different than they were even ten years ago. What we hope you will find new in this collection of articles is the use of literature as a base for developing a multi-faceted literacy in reading and language.

Each of the writers has been an elementary classroom teacher, and in the time since leaving that job, has spent many hours working with teachers. A common concern seems to be finding ways to increase children's ability to read with sureness and strength, to take in the author's written words and understand and interpret them effectively. Increasingly teachers seem to be interested in going beyond whatever basic reading instruction is included in the classroom, to seek even more productive ways of developing literacy. One approach is a planned, sequential use of literature to achieve these goals.

There are those who have questions about using literature for anything. Some experts maintain that literature should just "be," should be shared with children for whatever they choose to take from it, and should not be misused. Indeed literature can be abused, when it is not carefully studied and then thoughtfully incorporated into a sensitively developed sequence of activities which respects the integrity of the literature. Each of the authors of this book has a deep concern for literature, and each chapter conveys that feeling. What we are proposing, in the way of specific books and techniques for using them, is suggested within the framework of sharing our appreciation of literature for children.

A danger in books featuring writing by various authors is that in the end the efforts will remain separate: disparate ideas by different people. That problem is mitigated by the fact that these six authors share a common philosophy about the use of books with children.

Another effort has been made to link these separate chapters by use of headnotes relating each article to what preceded it.

The book opens with A. Barbara Pilon's chapter on the study of language, for what is more fundamental to a broad-based literacy than an understanding of the scope of the language we speak? Simple decoding skills are not enough if children remain unaware of the range and diversity of the language they are decoding.

Alden Moe's chapter focuses on very young children learning to read. On the basis of his research into vocabulary loads in picture books, the author makes a practical appeal for initial reading instruction based on these books.

Helen Felsenthal devotes her attention to older children who have already mastered basic decoding skills. These children are ready for wider-ranging examination of literature, including the use of nonfiction as a way of expanding literacy skills.

In the following chapter, John Stewig suggests venturing away from print, to develop visual and verbal literacy skills, two step-children in the language/reading curriculum. Children come to school with eyes open at the wonder of the world around them; they talk copiously about what they have perceived visually. Unfortunately, concern with helping children in receptive literacy—learning to read—too frequently inhibits development of these visual/verbal literacy skills.

Two other authors also favor branching out from the center of basal programs, involving children in related experiences which will enhance a wider kind of literacy. Richard Kolczynski examines the nature of the composition process, particularly as it relates to literature as motivational input. By helping children develop their expressive

literacy skills, we also improve the reading program we offer to them. Finally, Mary Jett-Simpson shows us ways that teachers can use informal classroom drama to enhance and assess children's comprehension abilities. These techniques are equally as effective as more traditional ways to understanding.

Many people have commented that it is not enough to teach children how to read; we must, in addition, teach children to *want* to read. With the feeling that basic reading programs often teach children how to read, but may not instill the *desire* to read, we have prepared this book. It is our feeling that the techniques described here do go beyond basic reading instruction to wider definitions of literacy that produce greater interest in reading.

John Warren Stewig

1 Reading to Learn about the Nature of Language

A. Barbara Pilon
Worcester State College

"Contagious" usually has a pejorative meaning, but it can also describe a kind of enthusiasm. In this chapter, A. Barbara Pilon reveals a contagious enthusiasm for words and their unique qualities.

The author is a word-o-phile, delighting in the history, derivations, unusual meanings, peculiarities, and possibilities of words. She sees each one as individual and believes that knowing words intimately helps children expand their reading-language power.

Pilon shares her fascination with words through the books she recommends and the activities she suggests. She hopes that teachers, too, will be motivated to help children develop this delight in words.

Some time ago, Walter Petty, in an important summary of the research about vocabulary and a survey of vocabulary teaching practices (*The State of Knowledge about the Teaching of Vocabulary*. Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1968), called for increased development of teaching techniques beyond isolated study of word lists. Pilon responds by suggesting practical ideas for children's word study as they work toward increased proficiency in language and reading.

Our language is calorie-rich. We are a nation unafraid of borrowing. We have never penalized our citizens in any way (as have the French, for example), for using words from another nation. In our adoption of foreign terms, as was said of Shakespeare, we invade like conquerors. There is much children can learn about the nature of language through reading.

Importance of imagination. Since language itself is fluid, chameleon-like, and has an unlimited potential for change and growth, children can be helped to see that imagination (what Jan Carew (1974) has called "the third gift") is the most important element in talking about our language.

Delight and magic of words. Helping children realize the delight and the magic of words should be one of our foremost goals as language arts and reading teachers. If we can accomplish this, then

many children will become "word gatherers," as was the title character in Leo Lionni's (1973) charming book *Frederick*.

Influence of words on all of us. Children also should become aware of the influence that words have upon all of us. We want our youngsters to be like Patricia Hubbell's Word Woman, who carries words with her in a jar, threading them to stars when she wants to travel (1958). We want them to be able to create, to soar and fly with language.

Teachers can explore with children, using books suggested here, to discover new vistas of the wonders and joys of language. Supplemental activities are described for teachers to use in conjunction with the books. Ideas about language that are discussed include:

1. Linguists all: the great potential for growth in language
2. Changes, changes: the Protean nature of words
3. To each his own: the arbitrariness of language
4. The role of intonation in language
5. Punctuation makes a difference: the role of juncture in language

Linguists All: The Great Potential for Growth in Language

An easy way to show children how new words have come into our language is to make up dittos containing lists of words that have come to us from other languages. This helps children see the eclectic nature of our language. The papers can be divided into columns to show Spanish, French, Italian, German, Indian, African, and other words that we have assimilated into English. Children can be encouraged to add to the lists, including the origins of their own names. Such an exercise is bound to enhance children's self-concepts, since they will realize how many "foreign" words they know.

Children's Books to Demonstrate Word Origins

Adelson, Leone. *Dandelions Don't Bite: The Story of Words*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

Ames, Winthrop, ed. *What Shall We Name the Baby?* New York: Pocket Books, 1974.

Boyer, Sophia A., and Lubell, Winifred. *Gifts from the Greeks: Alpha to Omega*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970.

Epstein, Beryl, and Epstein, Sam. *What's behind the Word?* Scholastic Book Services, 1964.

Ferguson, Charles W. *The Abecedarian Book*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964.
Fletcher, Christine. *100 Keys: Names across the Land*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973.
Kohn, Bernice. *What a Funny Thing to Say!* New York: Dial Press, 1974.
Lambert, Eloise. *Our Language: The Story of the Words We Use*. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1969.
Lambert, Eloise, and Pei, Mario. *Our Names*. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1960.
Mathews, Mitford M. *American Words*. Cleveland: World Pub., 1959.
McCormack, Jo Ann. *The Story of Our Language*. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1967.
Miller, Albert G. *Where Did That Word Come From?* Glendale, Calif.: Bowmar, 1974.
Stewart, George R. *Names on the Land*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958.

If we are to excite children about the "languages" they already know, then teachers must set the spark. Take familiar words—words dear to children's hearts and stomachs. Ask children if these are American words, then tell them where the words came from. Some to begin with might be:

1. *dungaree*—a Hindu word for cotton cloth called *dungri* (Epstein, 1964, p. 35).
2. *denim*—comes from France, specifically from the name of a city, *Nimes*. The word is short for *serge de Nimes*.
3. *jeans*—comes to us from Genoa and is short for the Italian term *jean fustian*. The sailors in Genoa wore clothes made from this kind of material. (Incidentally, jeans are also called *Levi's*, a word derived from the name of a man responsible for making Levi's so popular in this country. Words are often derived from people's names and this method of originating new terms should be made known to children. A fine resource book to use to help children become acquainted with eponyms is Bill Severn's (1966) *People Words*.)
4. *hamburger*—from Hamburg, Germany.
5. *frankfurter*—from Frankfurt, Germany.
6. *chocolate*—from the Mexican Aztec word *chocolatl* (Epstein, 1964, p. 35).

7. *candy*—comes from an ancient language, Sanskrit, once spoken in India. The word in Sanskrit is *khanda* which simply meant piece, but was frequently employed to refer to a piece of sugar (Epstein, 1964, pp. 33–34).
8. *cafeteria*—coffee shop, from Spanish *café* (coffee).

After children have explored the books mentioned, give them lists including such words as disaster, television, and astronaut, and ask them to attempt a logical explanation of their meanings. This kind of exercise will show children one way in which language grows. In addition, it may stir a curiosity for studying the etymologies of words. This is just what we are hoping for! Other ways to show children the great elastic potential of language are the use of:

1. *coined words*. Gelett Burgess made up his own dictionary called *Burgess Unabridged*. It contained six hundred words he thought were needed in the English language. One of the words found in current dictionaries is one Burgess created. It is *blurb* (Ferguson, 1964, p. 31). Children will enjoy making up some needed words of their own if they are given encouragement to do so. At this point no one has offered a satisfactory nonsexist word that can be used in such sentences as "Each of the children went to HIS seat," or "Every one of you is expected to do HIS share."
2. *portmanteau words*, or blends. Lewis Carroll is famous for his use of portmanteau words in *Alice in Wonderland*. A portmanteau word (the word *portmanteau* is a French term and literally means to carry a mantle) consists of putting two words together to make a new word. Some blends we use today, probably without thinking of the two words from which they came, are bash (bat and mash), clash (clap and crash), flare (flame and glare), glimmer (gleam and shimmer) (Farb, 1973, pp. 351–352). Other portmanteau words we all know very well include motel, brunch, and smog. Let children collect old dictionaries to find out if these words appear in them. Children enjoy making up their own portmanteau words. Provide some examples to get them started. You might try some like "submersed" in work, "innumbdated" with things to do, and a "clousy" day. One good book for children to look at which includes these patchwords is *Dandelions Don't Bite* by Leone Adelson.
3. *"slide" words*. Slide words have come into existence either by putting two letters or a letter and a word together to make one

new word. Examples of slide words are jeep and blimp. The word jeep originally was used by G.I.'s during World War II to describe a "general purpose" vehicle. Later the initials "G.P." were painted on the vehicles and the soldiers "slid" the letters together to get the word jeep. The word blimp came to us from the English who were working with "limp" airships during World War I. Their "A-limp" model did not work out, but their "B-limp" did. Eureka, blimp became a part of our vocabulary (Miller, 1974, pp. 8, 24).

4. *slanguage*. This is a portmanteau word, used to describe the way words take on new meaning in our vocabularies, extending and enriching language. In talking with children about our language, give them examples of such words as cool, bad, mean, tough, dough, and hot. Ask the class what the standard meanings of those words are, and how they think these words took on their present meanings. Let them add to the list of slanguage words. Have them consult various modern dictionaries to see whether or not the slang meanings are included. This is one method which helps children realize that an aspect of language is its changeability.

5. *brand words* derived from trademarks such as zipper, nylon, Ping-Pong, Band-Aid, Xerox, and Formica. Have children note that the more deeply embedded a word becomes in our language, the more casually we treat it. We can expect, thus, that one day soon all of these words will have lost their capital letters forever. Suggest to children that they look in different dictionaries to see whether or not certain words appear in them. The words Xerox and Formica, for example, do not appear at all in the 1950 edition of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. Children may be amazed to find out that within a short time new words evolve and become important parts of our vocabulary. In addition to brand names, there are always new medical discoveries, unusual events, inventions, and social changes which necessitate creation of new words. If the children are old enough, conversations can take place about terms they know that have either come into usage recently or have new meanings attached to them. They can discuss how and why these "new" words were created. Have them look at old dictionaries to see whether or not the words transplant and pacemaker (with their medical meanings), splashdown, skyjack, and snowmobile appear. Through such an activity, children come to realize that some dictionaries in use in

classrooms today most certainly do not contain words that many people will be acquainted with in the year 2001, just twenty-three years from now!

6. *acronyms*. Discuss with pupils the origins of such words as radar (a palindromic word, which is spelled the same backward as forward), snafu, posh, scuba, and laser.
7. *people words*. Initiate curiosity about words that have come to us from people, real or imaginary. Tell them the origins of the words tantalize, Pluto (ask children why they think Walt Disney named his famous dog Pluto), and Europe (reading Greek legends such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic *Tanglewood Tales* will help give children an appreciation of the words mentioned). Other words with fascinating "people" histories which may serve as a starter list for pupils, include cereal, chauvinism, mercury, volcano, January, Mars, March, June, July, August, October, bloomer, sandwich, pasteurize, gerrymander, guillotine, cardigan, raglan, spoonerism, and boycott. Nancy Sorel's *Word People* (1970), and Severn's *People Words* (1966), help children with some of these words.
8. *prefixes*, *suffixes*, and *compound words*. Many new words are incorporated into our language by the technique of adding prefixes or suffixes to root words and by putting two root words together to form new words.

The point of the foregoing itemization is to demonstrate the many strategies we employ to increase our language. Children should understand that *people* create language and that therefore *they* are capable of adding words to our English language. They can be the creators; they can be the makers of our music, not just the recipients. By working with some of these same techniques, children come to understand that one aspect of language is its ability to expand infinitely.

Changes, Changes: The Protean Nature of Words

An important facet of language is that it constantly changes sounds and meanings.

Euphemisms

Words and phrases change because people feel it is necessary to "pretty up" language. A garbage man now is called a sanitary engineer, an

undertaker is a mortician, a hairdresser is a beautician (Tiedt, 1975, p. 134), and the Vietnam War was referred to as an international armed conflict (Farb, 1973, p. 155). For further interesting reading about euphemisms, you may wish to look at Edwin Newman's *Strictly Speaking* (1974). Newman feels, and he has a valid argument, that the purpose of tampering with a word or phrase is often to obfuscate and conceal its true meaning.

Etymologies

By studying the etymologies of words, children can learn that location, time, and people affect the meanings as well as the pronunciations of words. Lively discussions occur as children are told, for example, that *queen* once meant just woman (Miller, 1974, p. 39). *Girl* meant a young person (McCormack, 1967, p. 29); it did not make any difference whether the person was a boy or a girl. (Since girl was once a nonsexist word, perhaps its original meaning should be adopted again.) *Female*, too, was originally *femelle*, a nonsexist word which meant a small woman, but because of its obvious resemblance to the word male, it was changed to what it is today (Farb, 1973, p. 161).

Sometimes words start out with rather inoffensive meanings and change to offensive ones, or vice versa. For instance, idiot once meant an ignorant person, while nice meant ignorant or foolish. As mentioned previously, changes in meaning are occurring continually in slang. A word such as heavy, which could carry a negative meaning in our slanguage, now can have a positive tone.

Sometimes we hear a word, think that a mistake has been made by the person pronouncing it, and undertake to change the word to make it "right." This is what has happened to *chaise lounge*, a French term that is actually spelled *chaise longue*—a long chair. Most people, however, refer to it as a *chaise lounge*, a logical change in pronunciation and spelling since it does reflect the function of the chair (Farb, 1973, pp. 352-353). Examples of foreign words which we anglicize in pronunciation and spelling are dandelion—French *dent de lion* (teeth of the lion) and real—Spanish *royal*.

Unusual Processes in English

In English there is a process by which a noun drops the letter "n" it originally had, and adds it to the article preceding it. Examples of such words are *an orange* (originally Arabic *naranj*), *an adder* (*a nadder*), and *an apron* (*a napron*) (Farb, 1973, pp. 339-340). In *Dandelions Don't Bite* by Adelson (1972, p. 27), the author gives the background of

the word *nickname*. Originally, it was an *eke name* but then, in a reverse process, it became *nekename* and finally *nickname*.

Losses

People tend either to drop unstressed parts of a word or a phrase, or to telescope them. This process of loss is evident if one is aware that originally the words pants, cab, piano, and nob, for example, were Pantalone (after a fifteenth century comedian), cabriolet, pianoforte, and nabob. As individuals become familiar with terms, too, there is a tendency to shorten them. Thus, television becomes TV, David becomes Dave, the day's eye becomes daisy, all one becomes alone, and by cause of becomes because (Adelson, 1972, p. 27).

Flexibility

After reading books such as the delightful *Amelia Bedelia* series (Parish, 1963), children will be conscious that many words in English are multinyms or homophones—words that are spelled alike and sound alike but have different meanings. Words such as box, shower, bark, trunk, and run all have multiple meanings and do change their meanings depending on the context. Children enjoy extending the stories about Amelia, a silly maid but a wonderful cook who, because of her emaciated vocabulary, is always getting into trouble. Amelia invariably has a meaning for a word, but unfortunately it is always the wrong meaning. Children find her misinterpretations hilarious.

Two books that can exercise children's logic as well as their vocabulary powers are *A Gaggle of Geese* (Merriam, 1960) and *Small Fry* (Merriam, 1965). These selections explain what units of animals are called. Children can be asked why they think a group of lions is called a pride of lions, or why a group of bears is called a sloth of bears. Have children define different assemblages of people and see if they can give logical attributes to the groups they are describing. Some children, when given this exercise, responded by creating the following collective words:

An ooze of bricklayers
A school of teachers
A muttering of mothers
A seat of secretaries
A gam of girls

Teachers of older children will find useful *An Exaltation of Larks*, by James Lipton (1968).

By studying the history of our language, children will know that language is made and changed by all of us. They will learn that change, not only in vocabulary but in usage and structure, is the one thing we can depend on, if a language is going to survive as a living tongue.

To Each His Own: The Arbitrariness of Language

Another aspect of language is its arbitrariness, not only when we refer to the words or lexicon of a language, but also when we refer to its syntax or structure. An easy way to demonstrate this is to tell children that although we call a dog a *dog*, in German the same animal is labeled a *hund*, in Spanish it is *perro*, and in Italian it is *cane*. Any good dictionary can supply other examples.

In introducing children to books that demonstrate the arbitrariness of language, teachers should select materials that show a story or poem in the foreign language(s) and in English.

Some Dual Language Books for Children

Belpre, Pura. *Perez and Martina*. New York: Frederick Warne, 1960.

Feelings, Muriel. *Moja Means One! Swahili Counting Book*. New York: Dial Press, 1971.

Frasconi, Antonio. *See and Say*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955.

Hautzig, Ester. *In the Park*. New York: Macmillan, 1968.

Joslin, Sesyle. *There Is a Dragon in My Bed (Il y a un Dragon dans Mon Lit)*. New York: Young Scott Books, 1958.

———. *Spaghetti for Breakfast (Spaghetti per Prima Colazione)*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965.

———. *There Is a Bull on My Balcony (Hay un Toro en Mi Balcón)*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966.

Pene Du Bois, William, and Po, Lee. *The Hare and the Tortoise: La Liebre y la Tortuga y la Tortuga y La Liebre*. New York: Doubleday, 1972.*

*It would help children if teachers who plan to present this book to their pupils could read Spanish, so that they could give a literal translation of the Spanish version of the story which appears opposite the English version.

By working with such materials, children can be led to see not only the arbitrariness of language, but the fluency, inventiveness, and creativity of its makers.

The Role of Intonation in Language

Almost everyone is capable of understanding early in life that how you say something is as important as what you say. Hearing someone say, *"That's lovely, isn't it?" is very different from reading the same words.* By listening, we know whether the person speaking is being sincere or sarcastic. Reading does not provide as many clues to its receivers as oral language does. Intonation clues are a great boon to comprehending what is meant. Certain books are especially valuable because they allow pupils an opportunity to have fun with language while gaining insight into the purpose of intonation.

Children's Books That Demonstrate the Function of Intonation

Brown, Marcia. *How, Hippo!* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969.
McPhail, David. *Oh, No, Go.* Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973.
Mayer, Marianne, and Mayer, Mercer. *Mine!* New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1973.

Another idea in working with intonation is to introduce children to wordless picture books. (A very complete annotated list of such books is presented by Donald Bissett in "Wordless Picture Books and Children's Language Development" in *Elementary English*, November 1972, pp. 1016–1021.) Let the children, either alone or in small groups, decide upon the captions for the pictures. Then they can present their versions of the book(s), utilizing their intonation skills as well as all their other language skills.

One book children enjoy working with is *The Elephant's Visit* (Warner, 1975). Another suggestion is *The Joneses* (Ramage, 1975). Although it does have six words on the first page—"Have a good day, dear husband!"—the rest of the book is wordless. The story tells of a family consisting of thirty-one children (one a dragon child), a mother who drives a submarine, and a father who stays home and takes care of the family. It would be good for two children to tell this story, since for most of the book the left-hand side shows what is going on at home while the right side depicts what is happening to the mother.

Other excellent wordless picture books have been created by Martha Alexander, Ruth Carroll, John Goodall, Mercer Mayer, and Fernando Krahn.

Punctuation Makes a Difference: The Role of Juncture in Language

Where we pause when we speak and how long we pause can make all the difference in the messages we are trying to convey. Howie Schneider, in a cartoon, "The Circus of P. T. Bimbo," (NEA, Inc., 1975) makes it clear that it is important, when advertising for an employee, to distinguish between a TIGHT rope walker and a TIGHTROPE walker. There is a difference, too, in the following two statements:

You should sit down before you eat Mother.

You should sit down before you eat, Mother.

Children enjoy making up and sharing their own sentences which prove that juncture markers are critical. However, before asking them to do this, work with them on some juncture exercises.

Children's Books Which Include Activities to Demonstrate the Need for Punctuation

Brewton, Sara, Brewton, John E., and Blackburn, G. Meredith III. *My Tang's Tungled and Other Ridiculous Situations*. New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1973, pp. 5, 6, 8, 10.

Gardner, Martin. *Perplexing Puzzles and Tantalizing Teasers*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969, p. 18.

Nurnberg, Maxwell. *Punctuation Pointers*. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1968, pp. 55–57.

———. *Fun with Words*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970, pp. 32–40.

Potter, Charles Francis. *More Tongue Tanglers and a Rigmarole*. Cleveland: World, 1964.

Withers, Carl. *A Treasury of Games*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964, pp. 125–126.

In these and other ways, as children read they learn about the nature of language. As we share such books and plan the suggested activities, children learn the delight of words. They come to understand the words of Emily Dickinson, who wrote:

A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.

I say it just
Begins to live
That day.

Additional Children's Books for Enjoyment of Language Development

Hanlon, Emily. *How a Horse Grew Hoarse on the Site Where He Sighted a Bare Bear: A Tale of Homonyms*. New York: Delacorte, 1976.

Hefter, Richard. *The Strawberry Word Book*. New York: Larousse, 1974.

Hunt, Bernice Kohn. *Your Ant Is a Which: Fun with Homophones*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975.

Keller, Charles. *Going Bananas*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975.

Keller, Charles, and Baker, Richard. *The Star-Spangled Banana and Other Revolutionary Riddles*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975.

Tremain, Ruthuen. *Fooling Around with Words*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1976.

References

Adelson, Leone. *Dandelions Don't Bite: The Story of Words*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

Burgess, Gellet. *Burgess Unabridged*. Ann Arbor: Midway Press, n.d.

Carew, Jan. *The Third Gift*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1974.

Epstein, Beryl, and Epstein, Sam. *What's Behind the Word?* New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1964.

Farb, Peter. *Word Play*. New York: Bantam Books, 1973.

Ferguson, Charles W. *The Abecedarian Book*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964.

Hubbell, Patricia. *Catch Me a Wind*. Paterson, N. J.: Atheneum, 1958.

Lionni, Leo. *Frederick*. New York: Knopf/Pantheon, 1973.

McCormack, Jo Ann. *The Story of Our Language*. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1967.

Merriam, Eve. *A Gaggle of Geese*. New York: Knopf, 1960.

———. *Small Fry*. New York: Knopf, 1965.

Miller, Albert G. *Where Did That Word Come From?* Glendale, Calif.: Bowmar, 1974.

Newman, Edwin. *Strictly Speaking*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1974.

Ramage, Corinne. *The Joneses*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1975.

Parish, Peggy. *Amelia Bedelia*. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

Severn, Bill. *People Words*. New York: Ives Washburn, 1966.

Sorel, Nancy. *Word People*. New York: American Heritage, 1970.

Tiedt, Iris M., and Tiedt, Sidney W. *Contemporary English in the Elementary School*, 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975.

Warner, Bob. *The Elephant's Visit*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1975.

2 Using Picture Books for Reading Vocabulary Development

Alden J. Moe
Purdue University

In the preceding chapter, A. Barbara Pilon gave a comprehensive overview of vocabulary development and referred to a wide variety of tradebooks which teachers can use to encourage children's interest in words.

In this chapter, Alden Moe shares his conviction that picture books can be used to increase children's vocabulary. Children come to school with impressive speaking and listening vocabularies. The school, then, is confronted with the problem of helping children continue to increase their command of words and their meanings. After presenting the results of his analysis of vocabulary load in over fifty picture books, the author suggests a procedure for their use in increasing children's vocabulary.

Using picture books to develop and expand a child's reading vocabulary is both appropriate and desirable. Frequent classroom use of picture books is recommended because the vocabularies of many picture books allow for successful reading while new words are being learned. The techniques presented and the books listed in this chapter may be used at any of the elementary school levels. However, the focus will be directed at those teachers who are concerned with vocabulary development at the primary levels of reading instruction.

Specifically, this chapter will present (1) a review of the listening and speaking vocabularies of children, (2) a listing of picture books with the size of their respective written vocabularies identified, and (3) a plan for introducing the new words in a picture book to children.

Speaking and Listening Vocabularies

Children enter school with extensive speaking and listening vocabularies. By the time the child has reached the age of five, his speaking vocabulary has grown to approximately 2000 words (McCarthy, 1954).

When the child begins grade one, his speaking vocabulary exceeds 3000 words (Templin, 1957; McCarthy, 1954; Murphy, 1957), and may even approach as many as 15,000 different words (Smith, 1941). These studies of over twenty years ago indicate that the beginning reader's language was extensive; the first-grade student of today probably has an even richer vocabulary. It also appears that even the most disadvantaged of inner-city children have extensive speaking vocabularies upon entrance to grade one (Dale, 1965; Sherk, 1973).

Listening vocabularies are even larger. Although the research findings vary greatly, it is evident that first-graders can listen to and understand between 10,000 and 20,000 different words. Children enter school with a richness in vocabulary; they already "know"—in an understanding sense—more words than they will learn to read in the first five or six years of school.

Where does the teacher begin in order to help the child with this rich language background match the spoken words he knows and written words he does not know? Generally, the teacher will begin with some published, packaged program designed specifically for the purpose of teaching children how to read. An alternative approach could be provided, using picture books and other tradebooks as the basic instructional materials, but this is usually not the case.[1]

Regardless of the approach or the program used to teach reading, tradebooks of all types can and should be used for vocabulary development and expansion. With the careful selection of books, students can progress and read increasingly more difficult books just as they progress through their "regular" reading materials.

The child who begins formal reading instruction will probably already have had a variety of prereading literary experiences. Such experiences should include listening to stories read by a parent or teacher and fun with the many good wordless picture books (Cianciolo, 1976; Larrick, 1976). The reading of stories is one of the best means of helping acquire a match between book language and oral language (Cazden, 1972; Cohen, 1968; McCormick, 1977; Moe, 1975).

---

1. A variety of other alternatives are described in the following publications:

Aukerman, R. C. *Approaches to Beginning Reading*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1971.

Hansen, H., and Hansen, R. "Language in Early-Childhood Education," in *Exploring Language with Children*, ed. John Warren Stewig. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1974.

Johnson, Dale D. "Current Approaches and Materials for Reading Instruction—Part I," and Moe, Alden J. "Current Approaches and Materials for Reading Instruction—Part II," in *Reading: Foundations and Instructional Strategies*, P. Lamb and R. Arnold, eds. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1976.

Picture Books with Easy Vocabularies

For primary grade children there are many good picture books to choose from (Cianciolo, 1973), but selection may become a problem at the beginning levels where the child may possess a reading vocabulary of only a few dozen words. However, with a limited reading vocabulary —a preprimer vocabulary of forty to fifty words, for example—the child can independently read some tradebooks, especially if the books have been read orally by the teacher to the class.

Beginning with *Drummer Hoff*, written with only 30 different words, through *Pelle's New Suit*, with 158 different words, the books in the list which follows provide the framework for a sequential vocabulary development program using picture books. Since most primers contain about 160 different words (Pescosolido, Schell, and Laurent, 1967), no book listed has a greater number of different words than the average primer.

Because of individual tastes, not all children will want to read each book listed. However, all the books are indeed of high quality and have been selected for their literary merit as well as their vocabularies. Whether they are introduced systematically or incidentally, these books ought to be available for students in the primary grades.

Selected Tradebooks for the Vocabulary Development of Primary-Grade Children

Adams, Adrienne. *A Woggle of Witches* (139).* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.

Alexander, Martha. *Blackboard Bear* (64). New York: Dial Press, 1969.

———. *I Sure Am Glad to See You, Blackboard Bear* (133). New York: Dial Press, 1976.

———. *The Story Grandmother Told* (147). New York: Dial Press, 1969.

Anglund, Joan. *Cowboy's Secret Life* (63). New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1963.

Asch, Frank. *Good Lemonade* (126). New York: Franklin Watts, 1976.

Balian, Lorna. *I Love You, Mary Jane* (79). Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967.

Barrett, Judith. *Animals Should Definitely Not Wear Clothing* (65). New York: Atheneum, 1970.

Barton, Byron. *Hester* (128). New York: Greenwillow Books, 1975.

Beskow, Elsa. *Pelle's New Suit* (158). New York: Harper and Row, 1929.

*The numeral in the parentheses beside each title indicates the total number of different words contained in the book.

Brandenberg, Franz. *Fresh Cider and Pie* (104). New York: Macmillan, 1973.

———. *I Wish I Was Sick, Too* (118). New York: Greenwillow Books, 1976.

Bright, Robert. *My Red Umbrella* (68). New York: William Morrow, 1957.

Brown, Marc. *Arthur's Nose* (150). Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976.

Brown, Marcia. *Once a Mouse* (156). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961.

Carle, Eric. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (107). New York: World Pub., 1969.

Carrick, Carol. *The Brook* (119). New York: Macmillan, 1967.

DeRegniers, Beatrice Schenk. *May I Bring a Friend?* (151). New York: Atheneum, 1964.

———. *Was It a Good Trade?* (77). New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1956.

Emberley, Barbara A. *Drummer Hoff* (30). Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967.

Freeman, Don. *A Rainbow of My Own* (138). New York: Viking Press, 1974.

Geddes, Barbara Bel. *So Do I* (75). New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1972.

Ginsburg, Mirra. *The Chick and the Duckling* (32). New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Goffstein, M. B. *Fish for Supper* (106). New York: Dial Press, 1976.

Greenberg, Dolly. *Oh Lord, I Wish I Was a Buzzard* (105). New York: Macmillan, 1968.

Hallinan, P. K. *We're Good Friends, My Brother and I* (137). Chicago: Children's Press, 1973.

Hogrogian, Nonny. *One Fine Day* (150). New York: Macmillan, 1971.

Holl, Adelaide. *The Rain Puddle* (155). New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1965.

Hutchins, Pat. *Clocks and More Clocks* (92). New York: Macmillan, 1970.

———. *Don't Forget the Bacon* (31). New York: Greenwillow Books, 1976.

———. *Good-Night, Owl* (51). New York: Macmillan, 1972.

———. *The Surprise Party* (103). New York: Macmillan, 1969.

———. *Titch* (46). New York: Macmillan, 1971.

———. *The Wind Blew* (91). New York: Macmillan, 1974.

Jensen, Virginia Allen. *Sara and the Door* (93). Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1977.

Keats, Ezra. *Goggles* (149). New York: Macmillan, 1969.
_____. *Peter's Chair* (153). New York. Harper and Row, 1967.
_____. *The Snowy Day* (157). New York: Viking Press, 1962.
Kellogg, Steven. *The Mystery of the Missing Red Mitten* (128). New York: Dial Press, 1974.
Krasilovsky, Phyllis. *The Very Little Boy* (103). New York: Doubleday, n.d.
Kraus, Robert. *Herman the Helper* (48). New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974.
_____. *Leo, the Late Bloomer* (78). New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973.
_____. *Milton, the Early Riser* (81). New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972.
_____. *Owliver* (74). New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974.
_____. *Whose Mouse Are You?* (57). New York. E. P. Dutton, 1972.
Krauss, Ruth. *The Carrot Seed* (45). New York: Harper and Row, 1945.
_____. *The Growing Story* (158). New York: Harper and Row, 1947.
Langner, Nora. *Miss Lucy* (50). New York: Macmillan, 1969.
Langstaff, John. *Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go* (45). New York: Atheneum, 1974.
Lapp, Eleanor J. *The Mice Came in Early This Year* (117). Chicago: A. Whitman, 1976.
Lenski, Lois. *The Little Farm* (98). New York: Henry Z. Walck, 1942.
Lent, Blair. *Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky* (147). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.
Lobel, Arnold. *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog* (91). New York: Bradbury Pr., 1968.
Mayer, Mercer. *You're the Scaredy Cat* (120). New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1974.
McPhail, David. *The Bear's Toothache* (111). Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1972.
Mendoza, George. *The Gillygoofang* (102). New York: Dial Press, 1968.
Miles, Miska. *Chicken Forgets* (145). Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976.
Nodset, Joan. *Come Here, Cat* (84). New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
_____. *Go Away, Dog* (83). New York: Harper and Row, 1972
Pinkwater, Manus. *Around Fred's Bed* (59). Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976.
_____. *Bear's Picture* (129). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.
Raskin, Ellen. *Nothing Ever Happens on My Block* (80). New York: Atheneum, 1966.
Rice, Eve. *What Sadie Sang* (105). New York: Greenwillow Books, 1976.
Rockwell, Anne. *The Awful Mess* (111). New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1973.

Ross, Jessica. *Fanona the Beautiful* (152). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.
Rossetti, Christina. *What Is Pink?* (45). New York: Macmillan, 1971.
Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are* (139). New York: Harper and Row, 1963.
Shulevitz, Uri. *Rain Rain Rivers* (95). New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1969.
Udry, Janice. *Let's Be Enemies* (112). New York: Scholastic Book Service, 1969.
Wells, Rosemary. *Morris's Disappearing Bag* (158). New York: Dial Press, 1975.
———. *Noisy Nora* (103). New York: Dial Press, 1973.
Williams, Barbara. *Someday, Said Mitchell* (119). New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976.
Williams, Garth. *The Chicken Book* (56). New York: Delacorte, 1970.
Zolotow, Charlotte. *Do You Know What I'll Do?* (93). New York: Harper and Row, 1958.
———. *May I Visit?* (143). New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

Introducing Unknown Words

Specific book selection and the introduction of "new" words may be a problem for the teacher, so a step-by-step plan is suggested. The primary grade teacher has a good idea which words are already a part of the students' reading vocabularies. In selecting a book the teacher's main concerns are that it contain a minimum of new or difficult words and have understandable and interesting content.

After the teacher has selected the book, it should be read to identify any "new" words which may not be a part of the students' reading vocabularies. In almost all cases, however, these "new" words will already be a part of the students' listening and speaking vocabularies.

The next step is for the teacher to read the book orally to the students,[2] paying special attention to the new words. These words may be emphasized by writing them on the chalkboard or, perhaps, by using flashcards prepared in advance. It should be emphasized, however, that the introduction and discussion of new words should not detract interest from the story itself.

While the teacher should introduce new words in the process of sharing the book with the students, it is not absolutely essential that all

2. Some helpful material on effective ways to read to children is included in *Language Experiences in Communication*, by Roach Van Allen. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976, pp. 358-360.

new words be introduced in advance. Often the context in which the word is used—as well as the pictures—will provide the meaning of the word for the student.

After the teacher has read the book orally to the class and introduced potentially difficult words, students should immediately be given an opportunity to read the book independently. Through independent reading, students' reading vocabularies will be expanded.

If most of the picture books listed in this chapter can be made available to primary-grade children, and if the teacher will introduce these books and their respective "new" words, the school will have in operation a program which will improve language competencies and reinforce the goals of the reading program.

References

Cazden, Courtney B. *Language in Early Childhood Education*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1972.

Cianciolo, Patricia. *Illustrations in Children's Books*, 2nd ed. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1976.

Cianciolo, Patricia, ed. *Picture Books for Children*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1973.

Cohen, Dorothy. "Effect of Literature on Vocabulary and Reading." In *Elementary English*, XLV (1968), pp. 209–213.

Dale, Edgar. "Vocabulary Development of the Underprivileged Child." In *Elementary English*, XLII (November 1965), pp. 778–786.

Larrick, Nancy. "Wordless Picture Books and the Teaching of Reading." In *The Reading Teacher*, XXIX (May 1976), pp. 743–746.

McCarthy, Dorothea. "The Language Development in Children." In *Manual of Child Psychology*, ed. by L. Carmichael. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1954.

McCormick, Sandra. "Should You Read Aloud to Your Children?" In *Language Arts*, 54 (Feb. 1977), pp. 139–143, 163.

Moe, Alden J. "Using the Child's Oral Language in Beginning Reading Instruction." In *Reading Horizons*, XVI (Fall 1974), pp. 32–35.

Murphy, Helen, et al. "The Spontaneous Speaking Vocabularies of Children in Primary Grades." In *Journal of Education*, 140 (December 1957), pp. 3–106.

Pescosolido, John R., Schell, Leo M., and Laurent, Marie-Jeanne. *Reading Approaches and Rituals*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1967.

Sherk, John K. *A Word-Count of Spoken English of Culturally Disadvantaged Preschool and Elementary Students*. Kansas City: University of Missouri at Kansas City, 1973.

Smith, M. K. "Measurement of the Size of General English Vocabulary through the Elementary Grades and High School." *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, XXIV (1941), pp. 311–345.

Templin, Mildred. *Certain Language Skills in Children: Their Development and Interrelationships*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957.

3 The Tradebook as an Instructional Tool: Strategies in Approaching Literature

Helen Felsenthal
Research for Better Schools, Philadelphia

Knowing individual words does not ensure reading proficiency. Readers must be able to sense the interrelationship of words and respond to the total message the author has created, whether that be a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire literary unit.

In this chapter, Helen Felsenthal describes ways to help children approach literature. Using works of literature as a major instructional tool for the teaching of basic reading skills, she describes a specific approach to literary genres through understanding basic elements of a genre and self-questioning. To help children learn about literature, Felsenthal plans experiences with character, plot, and setting, exposing children to literature which treats these elements in different ways. Then the children are shown how to ask themselves questions about the author's use of these elements. The final goal of such reading and self-questioning is heightened awareness of genre and the author's intent and a deeper understanding of what was read.

As mentioned in the introduction to this book, teachers are often hesitant to use literary works for instructional purposes. They fear that students may be "turned off" from reading good literature if required to dissect the material by answering work sheet questions or by coerced participation in boring oral discussions.

Clearly students should not be taught in ways that lead to a dislike of literature and a subsequent lack of reading for enjoyment. But teachers can do more than simply "expose" their students to books; they can help them develop the skills necessary to enjoy literature.

This chapter presents approaches to the teaching of basic reading skills which are necessary for the understanding and enjoyment of two basic literary forms: fiction and nonfiction. The teaching is centered around literary works as the major instructional tool and offers strategies for understanding each genre.

The teaching of literature per se is not possible; rather, literature is experienced. However, the knowledge of what literature is and how it functions can be taught.

The major idea behind the strategies approach is that students learn the basic elements of a genre and learn the important questions to answer as they read. These basics are applied each time the student reads so that the strategy becomes a natural way to approach literature. As students become more advanced readers, their application of the basic strategy becomes more sophisticated and they acquire greater understanding and enjoyment from the literature they read.

Learning about Fiction

Fiction is the type of literature to which students are introduced earliest and which they encounter most frequently during the elementary school years. Reading fiction for recreational purposes can provide a lifelong source of entertainment and information.

Basic Elements of Fiction

Most fiction contains three basic elements or considerations:

Character—Who is the story about?

Action or plot—What happens?

Setting—Where and when does it happen?

Students can be asked to give examples of these elements in a favorite fiction story. They can name some characters, tell about the action or plot, and describe the setting. From this description, fiction can be defined as storytelling in which at least one of the three elements comes from the imagination of the author. Students will enjoy speculating upon which of the elements in their favorite stories are not real. For example, after reading *Johnny Tremain* (Forbes, 1970) children might be asked to think about such questions as:

1. Was Johnny a real or made up character?
2. What things about him make you feel that way?
3. Is Boston an actual city?
4. What descriptions given by the author lead you to this conclusion?
5. Did the events described in the story actually take place?
6. If you weren't certain about the authenticity of the events, how could you find out?

Basic Questions about Fiction

The answers derived from basic questions about fiction help students understand and remember the story better, and help them know what kind of fiction they are reading.

Ask children to consider questions about the *character*:

1. Who is the main character? Is it someone who:
   a. really lived?
   b. was made up for the story?
   c. can likely exist?
2. Who are the other characters?
   a. real or made up?
   b. likely or unlikely to exist?
3. What do the characters' speech, action, ideas, or appearance tell you about them?
4. What reasons do the characters have for the things they do?
5. How do the characters feel about each other?
6. Do any characters learn something important in the story?
7. Do they change their attitudes or behavior?

Children also need to think about questions related to the *action* in the story:

1. Is the main action of the story:
   a. physical?
   b. something that takes place in the imagination?
2. Is the main action:
   a. something that really happened?
   b. something made up for the story?
   c. something that would be likely to happen in the world?
3. What effect does the action have on the characters?
4. What is the primary problem that the characters have?
5. How is the problem solved?

Finally, we want children to discuss questions about the *setting*:

1. Where does the action happen?
   a. What details tell you that?
   b. Is it a real place? A place made up for the story? A likely place?
2. Does the setting indicate a particular period in history?
3. Could the same story happen in a different setting? Why or why not?

Applying the Questions to a Specific Book

A sample application of this technique is used with the book *Harriet the Spy* (Fitzhugh, 1964), an example of realistic fiction about preadolescents:

1. Who is the main character? Is it someone who:
   a. really lived?
   b. was made up for the story?
   c. can likely exist?

Possible response: The main character is Harriet M. Welsch, an eleven year old. She probably did not actually live, but is a character created by the author. Harriet could have lived because she is described as, and acts like, a real person.

2. Who are the other characters?
   a. real or made up?
   b. likely or unlikely to exist?

Possible response: The other characters are friends of Harriet (Beth Ellen, Pinky Whitehead, Carroll Andrews, etc.) and her nannie. They are probably made up by the author, but could have lived.

   c. What do the characters' speech, action, ideas, or appearance tell you about them?

Possible response: The characters appear to be like other preadolescents. The author describes a possible setting (school or home) and most of the behavior can be explained as incidents typical of happenings in the life of fifth or sixth graders.

   d. What reasons do the characters have for the things they do?
   e. How do the characters feel about each other?
   f. Do any characters learn something important in the story?

Possible response: Harriet learns that many of her private feelings (which she often writes in a notebook) can cause misunderstandings.

   g. Do they change their attitudes or behavior?

Possible response: The characters change their attitudes toward each other when they learn to understand each other better.

3. Is the main action of the story:
   a. physical?
   b. something that takes place in the imagination?

Possible response: The main action centers around Harriet and her preadolescent friends and how they learn to relate to each other. Much of the action actually happens, but the author also tells us about many things that go on in Harriet's mind.

4. Is the main action:
   a. something really happened?
   b. something made up for the story?
   c. something that would be likely to happen in the story?

Possible response: Most of the actions could really happen, but the author probably made them up.

5. What effect does the action have on the characters?

6. What is the main problem that the characters have?

Possible response: The main problem is how the characters learn to accept growing up and the changes they have to make in dealing with others.

7. How is the problem solved?

Possible response: The problem is solved as they learn how to relate to each other.

8. Where does the action happen?

Possible response: Most of the action takes place in the major character's environment (school, home, community).

   a. What details tell you that?
   b. Is it a real place? A place made up for the story? A likely place?

Possible response: The setting is realistic.

9. When does the story take place?
   a. Could the same story happen in a different setting? Why or why not?

Possible response: The setting is contemporary. Most of the story deals with problems common to current times, so the setting is important in development of the story line. However, a similar story (how children relate to each other and grown-ups) could be developed in a different time setting.

Four Types of Fiction

As the students look for answers to these basic questions, they can begin to identify the different types of fiction. Most fiction for children can be classified into one of four categories: realistic; fanciful; historical; or biographical. Of these, the first two types are most common and easily enjoyed. Historical fiction is less common, and children will need help in appreciating it.

1. Realistic fiction:
   a. uses one or more elements that are made up for the story

b. uses elements which seem likely
c. can be of various types

2. Fanciful fiction:
   a. uses one or more elements that are made up for the story, and
   b. one or more elements that seem unlikely or impossible[1]
3. Historical fiction:
   a. uses a real time setting in the past, and
   b. uses elements which are likely
4. Biographical fiction:
   a. uses a main character who really lived, and
   b. uses elements which seem likely

Books Which Exemplify the Four Types of Fiction

Following are some examples of children's literature from each of the fiction categories which could be used to develop the reading strategies suggested. The approximate readability level is identified at the end of the reference.

Realistic Fiction

Carlson, Natalie Savage. *Ann Aurelia and Dorothy*. New York: Harper and Row, 1968. (5th)

Cleary, Beverly. *Otis Spofford*. New York: William Morrow, 1953. (3rd)

Clymer, Eleanor. *My Brother Stevie*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967. (4th)

Fitzhugh, Louise. *Harriet the Spy*. New York: Harper and Row, 1964. (5th)

Konigsburg, E. L. *Altogether, One at a Time*. New York: Atheneum, 1971. (5th)

Little, Jean. *Take Wing*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968. (5th)

Mann, Peggy. *My Dad Lives in a Downtown Hotel*. New York: Doubleday, 1973. (2nd)

Miles, Miska. *Hoagie's Rifle-Gun*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970. (2nd)

O'Dell, Scott. *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960. (6th)

1. A fine critical analysis of this type of fiction is included by Eleanor Cameron in *The Green and Burning Tree* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969). The book, a collection of essays, features a section on fantasy (pp. 3–136). Cameron speaks with authority on this topic, since she is recognized as one of the most significant writers of fantasy for children.

Fanciful Fiction

Aiken, Joan. *Armitage, Armitage, Fly Away Home*. New York: Macmillan, 1966. (6th)

Blassingame, Wyatt. *Pecos Bill Rides a Tornado*. Champaign, Ill.: Garrard, 1973. (3rd)

Bradbury, Ray. *S Is for Space*. New York: Harold Matson Co., 1954. (3rd)

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. London: Spring Books, 1865. (7th)

Seldon, George. *The Genie of Sutton Place*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973. (4th)

Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *Zlateh the Goat and Other Stories*. New York: Harper and Row, 1966. (5th)

White, E. B. *The Trumpet of the Swan*. New York: Harper and Row, 1970. (7th)

Historical Fiction

Forbes, Esther. *Johnny Tremain*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970. (5th)

Gauch, Patricia Lee. *Thunder at Gettysburg*. New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1975. (4th)

Hunt, Irene. *Across Five Aprils*. Chicago: Follett, 1964. (8th)

Pope, Elizabeth Marie. *The Sherwood Ring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958. (7th)

Speare, Elizabeth George. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958. (6th)

Biographical Fiction

Anderson, LaVere. *Allan Pinkerton: First Private Eye*. Champaign, Ill.: Garrard, 1972. (5th)

Bulla, Clyde Robert. *Pocahontas and the Stranger*. New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1971. (3rd)

Muir, Jean. *The Adventures of Grizzly Adams*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971. (7th)

Neimark, Anne E. *Touch of Light: The Story of Louis Braille*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970. (8th)

Uchida, Yoshiko. *Journey to Topaz*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971. (7th)

Approaching fiction by identifying the basic elements (character, action, setting) and answering basic questions helps the reader to

anticipate what will happen as the story develops. This ability to predict plot leads to an even greater understanding and appreciation of literary fiction.

Learning about Nonfiction

As students progress through school, they encounter nonfiction works more frequently as they begin to read biographies, use reference books, read newspapers, and do independent study in content areas such as science and social studies. Nonfiction is a genre which requires an entirely different approach, but the strategy can be similar to that of fiction. Students can learn how to identify different kinds of nonfiction and to answer basic questions during their reading.

Basic Kinds of Nonfiction

Although there are many kinds of nonfiction, there are two main types, exposition and argument. The author's purpose differentiates the two types.

1. Exposition is nonfiction which:
   a. tries to explain something to the reader, or
   b. tries to help the reader understand a subject or idea
2. Argument is nonfiction that:
   a. tries to persuade the reader, or
   b. tries to make someone do or believe a certain thing

Students can be asked to decide the purpose of common types of nonfiction such as:

1. a newspaper editorial asking you to vote for a certain candidate (argument)
2. a book chapter or section which describes the different parts of a flower (exposition)
3. a newspaper article telling you how to change a car tire (exposition)
4. a letter asking you to send money to help crippled children (argument)
5. an article which tells why the author likes bird-watching (exposition)
6. a letter asking you to join the Junior Wilderness Society and work to save America's forests from destruction (argument)

7. a biography—the life of an actual person, told by someone else (exposition)[2]

Students can also volunteer other examples of nonfiction, and decide whether they are exposition or argument.

Basic Questions about Nonfiction

Answering these basic questions during the reading of nonfiction can help the reader understand the purpose and remember the writing better:

1. What is the subject or main theme of the selection?
2. What point of view does the author take in presenting the subject or theme?
3. What facts/opinions are used?
4. What causes are explained?
5. What are the effects of the causes?
6. What conclusions are made?
7. What generalizations are used?
8. What ambiguities need to be understood?
9. What is the author's purpose in writing the selection?

The answers to these questions will help to identify the type of nonfiction. Not all questions are always appropriate for all nonfiction writing.

Applying the Questions to a Specific Book

The following is a sample application of argument using part of the book, *The Real Me*, by Betty Miles (New York: Knopf, 1974, pp. 22–24). *The Real Me* is written as if the author were an eleven-year-old girl named Barbara Fisher, Fair Park, N. Y. Barbara has opinions on many subjects and expresses her opinions in what she terms "essays." The following questions and responses are based on Chapter Two, essay "On Signs."

2. Biography includes an amazingly wide range of subjects, and should offer something to every child reader. There are accounts of lives of people who lived long ago in distant lands. See, for example, *A Basket in the Reeds* by Raphael Saporta, a poetic retelling of the story of the baby Moses (Minneapolis: Lerner, 1965). In contrast, there are accounts of people living more recently in our country. An engrossing account, written by Margaret Crary, describes the life of *Susette la Flesche*, an intrepid Omaha Indian woman who campaigned for the rights of her people (New York: Hawthorn, 1973). For those children who want to read about contemporary people, see *Women Today*, by Greta Walker (New York: Hawthorn, 1975).

1. What is the subject or main theme of the selection?

Possible response: The main theme concerns the idea that many signs are deceptive. An example is the never-changing sign in the grocery store, "BANANAS, YELLOW, RIPE" over bananas which the author feels are often "GREEN, HARD."

2. What point of view does the author take in presenting the subject or theme?

Possible response: The author feels that sign readers should be very cautious in interpreting signs.

3. What facts/opinions are used?

Possible response: Most of the writing concerns the author's opinion (the sign SMILE "usually works backward on me"). However, there are some facts which could be checked (the sign OPEN on the cleaner's door can be seen at midnight and Sundays when they aren't open).

4. and 5. What causes are explained and what are the effects of the causes?

Possible response: Signs can often cause people difficulties. For example, the author claims she has seen people "get out of their cars with bundles of clothes to be cleaned and try to open the door and then have to put all their clothes back in the car and take them home again" on holidays or other times when the sign says OPEN but the door is locked.

6. and 7. What conclusions are drawn and what generalizations are used?

Possible response: The author concludes that the reader should investigate the truthfulness of signs before accepting them. The generalization made by the author is that many signs are untrue.

8. What ambiguities need to be understood? (Not applicable to this selection.)

9. What is the author's purpose in writing the selection?

Possible response: The author's purpose is to try to persuade the reader to be more careful in the interpretation of signs because she believes that signs can be misleading.

The following books could be used to develop lessons employing the nonfiction strategies suggested here. The approximate readability grade level is given at the end of the reference.

Books Which Exemplify Different Forms of Nonfiction

Nonfiction: Exposition

Andrews, Roy Chapman. *All About Dinosaurs.* New York: Random House, 1953. (5th)

Brown, Dee. *Tales of the Warrior Ants.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973. (9th)

Cobb, Vicki. *The Long and Short of Measurement.* New York: Parents Magazine Press, 1973. (4th)

Cousteau, J. Y. *The Silent World.* New York: Harper and Row, 1953. (9th)

Hesselberg, Erik. *Kon-Tiki and I.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970. (6th)

Lauber, Patricia. *Junior Science Book of Volcanoes.* Champaign, Ill.: Garrard, 1965. (3rd)

Lifton, Betty Jean. *Return to Hiroshima.* New York: Atheneum, 1970. (7th)

Mandry, Kathy. *How to Grow a Jelly Glass Farm.* New York: Random House, 1974. (3rd)

Sutton, Felix. *Indian Chiefs of the West.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970. (8th)

Van Lawick-Goodall, Jane. *In the Shadow of Man.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971. (7th)

Nonfiction: Argument[3]

Aiken, Joan. "Take a Book Wherever You Go." *Cricket Magazine,* Vol. 2, December 1974, pp. 22–23. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Pub. Co. (4th)

Blough, Glenn O., and Campbell, Marjorie. *When You Go to the Zoo.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955. (4th)

Miles, Betty. "On Signs." *The Real Me.* New York: Knopf, 1974, pp. 22–24. (6th)

Rosenbaum, Jean, and McAuliffe, Lutie. *What Is Fear: An Introduction to Feelings.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972. (5th)

The study of nonfiction works offers the student the opportunity to use and apply basic comprehension skills. The integration of these skill concepts through application in literary works leads to more critical reading.

3. There are very few children's books which can be classified wholly as argument. The books referred to include some sections which could be considered argument.

Summary

Teachers who use tradebooks as instructional tools can choose from a wide range of books, matching interest and ability of students with specific literature. Reading strategies for approaching fiction and nonfiction can be developed into several types of lessons. The lesson can take the form of small group discussions, game card questions developed from the basic questions but applied to specific books, or forms of creative drama, acting out the basic elements.

A chart outlining the important aspects of each strategy can serve as a reference, since repeated practice of the strategies is necessary before the technique becomes a natural way to approach literature. Student Guides for each genre can be used either as a wall chart or given to each student to use as a reference.

The reading strategies provide a structure or framework that will help the reader to organize and understand the information presented in print. This approach differs from the "skills in isolation" approach where specific skills are taught separately, often without application in actual reading. The reading of fiction and nonfiction requires combinations of reading skills. The understanding of the interrelationships among these skills offers a challenge which students are able to meet if they know the basic structure of each genre. The tradebook can become an exciting and useful instructional tool in the teaching of language skills.

Student Guide
Learning about Fiction

Definition: The three basic elements in fiction are: (1) Character, (2) Action, and (3) Setting. Fiction is writing in which one or more of the three elements are made up, not true.

Questions to Ask as You Read:

1. Character: Who is it about?
2. Action: What happens? What is the problem?
3. Setting: Where and when does it happen?

Kinds of Fiction:

1. Realistic fiction: The story could possibly happen, but parts are made up by the author for the story.
   a. Historical fiction: A real setting in *past time*.
   b. Biographical fiction: The main character *must* be real.

2. Fanciful fiction: Character, action, or setting are unlikely or impossible.

Predictions: Use what you know about character, action, and setting to *predict* what might happen next.

Student Guide
Learning about Nonfiction

Definition: Nonfiction is writing that tells about *actual* people, events, and things.

Two Main Kinds of Nonfiction:

1. Exposition
   a. tries to *explain* something
   b. tries to help the reader *understand*

   Examples of exposition are:
   (1) news articles, textbooks, encyclopedia articles
   (2) biography (the life story of an actual person, told by someone else)
   (3) autobiography (the life story of an actual person, told by that person)

2. Argument
   a. tries to persuade the reader to do or believe something
   b. tries to make the reader agree with a certain idea

   Examples of argument are:
   (1) editorials
   (2) advertisements
   (3) letters asking you to help someone or to buy something

General Questions to Ask as You Read

1. What is the subject?
2. What is the main idea?
3. What facts are used? What opinions?
4. What causes are there? What effects?
5. What conclusions are made?
6. What generalizations are used?
7. What ambiguities need to be understood?
8. What is the author's purpose in writing the selection?
9. What kind of nonfiction is this?

Bibliography

Arbuthnot, May Hill, and Sutherland, Zena. *Children and Books*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1977.

An unusually complete section on Information Books is included (pp. 444–487). The authors begin with an examination of the criteria in evaluating and selecting such books: accuracy, organization/scope, currency, author's responsibility/competence, format, and style. Following this they provide a detailed survey of twenty-eight of the most significant authors of information books writing today. Additional pages look specifically at writing in topic areas.

Londsdale, Bernard, and Mackintosh, Helen. *Children Experience Literature*. New York: Random House, 1973, pp. 409–439.

The authors provide a useful description of the history of biography-writing for children, and describe the range of books available today. Biographies are grouped according to occupations, a helpful arrangement for the teacher who needs to recommend books to a child with a specific interest. A liberal assortment of black and white illustrations is included.

4 Book Illustration: Key to Visual and Verbal Literacy

John Warren Stewig
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

The first three chapters dealt with the building blocks of literature: words and larger literary elements. But children's literature is not simply language. Usually, the author's intent is augmented by the illustrations, which extend and enhance concepts. We sometimes erroneously assume that children understand and appreciate the pictures which accompany literature. Unless we help children to become aware of the illustrations as an extension of the story, we may miss opportunities to increase literacy.

In the preceding chapter, Helen Felsenthal suggested a strategy for approaching literature. In this chapter, John Stewig presents a needed strategy for approaching the pictures which accompany the literature. Apart from some simple identification questions, teachers seldom ask children to study pictures. We must develop ways to encourage children to interact with the illustrations, so that the artist can then provide additional content and comment, adding richly to the readers' understanding and enjoyment of the story.

Those who teach children to read are keenly aware of the word literacy, that elusive goal toward which we work. Much effort has been expended, and many words written about achieving reading literacy—the ability to decode and utilize what is decoded. Most definitions of literacy include being able to read and write. Our colleagues in language arts have expended similar lavish amounts of time on ways to help children achieve written literacy.

Yet such efforts are incomplete, since they do not include an important component: visual and verbal literacy. For to be truly literate, especially in today's society, we must be able to decode messages in pictures, and to encode our findings in verbal language. How can such an assertion be justified?

Obtaining Visual Literacy

A recent article pointed out that about eighty percent of our information comes to us visually (Debes, 1974). Our bombardment by visual stimuli is so universal that it hardly evokes comment. Yet where in the curriculum do we teach children to "read" such visual input—to examine it carefully part by part, extracting meaning and interacting with what is extracted? Such processes are central to the reading program, but few children learn to read pictures effectively.

Developing Verbal Literacy

A second important factor is developing verbal literacy: the ability to put coherent thoughts into words, words into sentences, and sentences into larger units. We have known for some time that most of us spend more time communicating orally than in either reading or writing (Stewig, 1974). Yet where in the elementary curriculum do we help children learn to express in words what they have taken in through their senses? Specifically, where do we help children learn to talk cogently and literately about what they see in pictures, and other visual stimuli?

Approaches to instruction in visual and verbal literacy are as yet a mosaic of interesting ideas, rather than a coherent philosophy or a unified approach to educating young children. One pair of authors, in beginning a description of a program for visual literacy, has commented:

> Especially after the early grades, there is a tendency to minimize the visual aspects of communication and children are, in a sense, 'weaned away' from pictures and illustration. . . . (Fransecky and Debes, 1972, p. 23)

If children are seldom encouraged to study illustrations, so they are even less often asked to translate what they have learned in this visual mode into the verbal mode. Putting thoughts about what was learned visually into spoken words is an important challenge all children should experience.

Visual-Verbal Skills

In developing visual-verbal literacy, there are three subskills to be considered. These are sequential, from simple to more complex, and

children should have opportunities to develop one skill before moving on to the next one.

1. Describe What You See

The first of these skills is to *describe* objectively—clearly, concisely, concretely—what the child sees. It is apparent that another "c," a commonly advanced purpose for elementary education—creativity—is *not* included here. As there are times, according to Evans (1967) when creativity in children's writing is unimportant if not irrelevant, so there are times in verbal language when the crucial task is observing accurately and then describing with clarity. What we are asking children to do is to study an object providing visual input, and then translate this input into words.

2. Compare Two Different Objects

The second of these skills is an extension of the first—to *compare* two different objects using common descriptors. That is, given two objects, can the child accurately describe the two, including the differences which exist? A logical way to begin this process with young children is to provide opportunities for them to observe their classmates and then describe what they have noticed. Or, in looking at two pictures, can the child see what is similar about them, and what sets them apart from each other? If we have two versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, can children describe how Little Red is the same or different in the pictures?

3. Learn to Determine and Compare Value

The third, more sophisticated, and most important of these three visual-verbal skills is the ability to *value* one of the objects. That is, we want children to develop the ability to say which picture they prefer, and why. This verbal ability is important because few are capable of more than an impoverished description of their evaluations. Listen to an adult tell you what he likes. Inchoate thoughts too often come out as insistent reiterations of what a person "likes." Indeed it is a rare individual who can give a convincing reason for a visual preference. The adult who insists that, "I don't really know anything about art, but I know what I like," is not only telling the listener about an impoverished background, but also a muddled thought process and a paucity of verbal expression. Believing, then, that this three-part ability is crucial for adults and possible for children, what kinds of

experiences should classroom teachers plan to develop children's visual-verbal literacy?

Materials to Use

Some writers who are beginning to describe the possibilities in visual literacy recommend film study. This is indeed an exciting possibility after preparatory experiences. For the young child, however, such visual images on film move too quickly, and are not conducive to study and reflection. Additional drawbacks are the cost and relative inconvenience of film.

As an alternative, a plentiful, convenient, and relatively inexpensive source of material exists: the illustrations in children's books. Much of what we do with developing visual and verbal skills can be done through this medium. Countless artists work in the field, and picture and illustrated books have proliferated rapidly. The teacher is at no loss, therefore, to find materials children may use in developing these skills.

It is a simple task to locate several artists' illustrations of the same story or poem as a basis for practicing each of the three skills. *Cinderella, Rumplestiltskin, Chanticleer and the Fox*—these and countless other tales in children's literature have long inspired artists to create their own impressions of the story. Poetry has also received such attention from artists. Such well-known poems as Lear's "The Owl and the Pussycat" have been illustrated by several artists, and can be used as the basis for describing, comparing, and valuing experiences.

Variety in Style

Using illustrations from books as stimulus material, the teacher is helping children study the illustrations as a separate entity, not merely for the extension or augmentation they provide the text. Each should be examined as an independent visual artifact with a meaning of its own. With young children, begin very simply, using one illustration and asking children to tell what they see, to detail what they take in visually.

The Three Billy Goats Gruff is a logical starting point in working with kindergarten or first grade children. Locate a variety of illustrations for the story, and then ask children to tell what they see. The teacher may wish to focus attention on the visual treatment of the goats. The bold rendering in casein by Stobbs (1967) is quite unlike the

dainty hoofed goat by Lenski (Hutchinson, 1925). The rakish mien of one goat (Asbjornsen and Moe, 1957), sketched casually by Marcia Brown in fluid ink line, is different from the precise black designs by Vroman (Asbjornsen and Moe, 1963). Different from any of these are the brown and white goats by the d'Aulaires, crossing in trio above a huge troll.

At another time attention might be focused on the troll, an unloved and too frequently ignored soul. One artist has portrayed him as a gargantuan creature, another as a long-nosed and hairy being, still another as brooding and almost perplexed. One artist shows a fey creature which scarcely seems likely to devour the goats.

Another favorite of the young child is *Little Red Riding Hood*. The visual treatment of Little Red varies from the stolid interpretation by Bruna (1966), through the pixie created in lithography by Jean Merrill (1968), to the apprehensive little girl overwhelmed by the encompassing forest drawn by Aloise (Gant, 1969). The scene at the bedchamber with both the wolf and Little Red brings forth many responses. One child commented that she liked this one because, "Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf are both so funny looking" (Pincus, 1968). Another said, "I like this one better because there's so much to look at in it." In looking at the picture by Hogrogian (1967), one child commented, "Little Red should have the glasses on. Then she could see by the big nose that it's a wolf and not grandma!"

After children have had several experiences in describing what they see in pictures, they can move to the next skill, which is comparing two pictures for the same story or poem. In all of these experiences, children are learning to absorb impressions through their sense of sight, and give verbal expression to their observations and comparisons.

A favorite of older children, *Cinderella*, works well for comparison purposes. A French version of the tale has Cinderella posed beside the clock which bids her leave (Contes de Perrault, 1956). The affluence of the home from which she is liberated is shown in the highly stylized version by Lenski (Hutchinson, 1925). Other characters are added in Brown's (1954) watercolor wash treatment which depicts both the consideration of the prince and the dismay of the sisters. We sometimes encourage children to compare the illustrative treatment of the prince. The prince by Ness (Haviland, 1965), in bold modern robes and unfortunately large feet, is very different from the one by Brown (Haviland, 1965). The luxuriant patterning evident in Ness' woodcuts captures and holds children's attention as they explore the wealth of visual detail. Girls especially enjoy comparing and contrasting the ball gowns of Cinderella. One said of the romantic, yet gothic illustration

by Arthur Rackham (1950), "Her dress is so fluffy it looks like it could float to the ball by itself." When studying the illustration in the Lang book (1948), another girl wondered how Cinderella could run fast in such a skirt.

Puss in Boots is an old tale which never fails to amuse children, who delight in the sly cat's efforts to trick people. Some versions are done in simple black and white (Huber, 1965); yet even when the color is limited and the technique is similar, there are discernible differences in interpretation (Johnson, 1961). The lithographs of Brown's (1952) debonair cat and Fischer's (1959) striped one, both limited in color, nevertheless are favorites of children and do stimulate oral description.

MATERIAL REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Illustration by Hans Fischer reproduced from PUSS IN BOOTS by permission of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

More complex treatments good for comparison purposes also show wide variety of style (Haviland, 1959). One child remarked of this version, "I like this one because it looks like it happened in a foreign country" (Kastner, 1957).

The familiar story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* has challenged the talents of many artists, ranging from favorite old illustrations by Arthur Rackham to a recent version by Anne Rockwell (1975). Sometimes the bears remain animals, as in the illustrations by Rackham (1950). At other times they are made very human; Lenski (Hutchinson, 1925) clothes her family, as does Stobbs (1965).

Comparing the treatment of the central character is facilitative in determining verbal language fluency. Three artists show her sampling the porridge, yet in each case the illustration is very unlike the others (*The Three Bears*, 1955; Rojankovsky, 1948; *My Book of Goldilocks*, 1962).

This old tale is useful in demonstrating for children the idea of story variation. Folk and fairy tales are available in many versions. This story, unlike others, can be traced to a specific author, Eleanor Mure (1967). In her original version, the intruder was not a sweet child, but rather a greedy old woman. The incensed bears, not content with chasing her from the house, tried to do away with her in the fireplace. To their dismay, they discovered she was noncombustible. The Andrew Lang (1949) version also depicts an irascible old lady, not dismayed, but in fact rather annoyed at having her sleep interrupted. Still another mutation of the story, which captivates children but arouses the wrath of some of their teachers, is the one by Tony Palazzo (1959). He depicts a conventional enough trio of bears, but a highly unconventional Goldilocks.

Using Poetry

The illustrations for many poems are also helpful in motivating children in the process of describing, comparing, and valuing. Several illustrations are available for the two poems, "The Owl and the Pussycat," and "Old Mother Hubbard."

The nonsense of Lear's poem, "The Owl and the Pussycat" (1961), has intrigued many artists, beginning with the poet himself. Lear's illustrations are of interest historically, but do not capture children's attention and motivate verbal language as easily as do other versions. For example, contrast them with the contemporary open color illustrations of Cooney (1961) which evoke a lush forest repast. This poem is

also available in a French version, which can be used with children to reinforce the idea that people write and read different languages, an important aid in guiding children away from the ethnocentrism so natural to them when they are young.

Mother Goose rhymes also offer rich possibilities for developing verbal facility. "Old Mother Hubbard" is one which has drawn illustrations from a variety of artists. Though in most drawings she is in cap and apron, there the similarities stop, and a wide difference in interpretation is available. Some are in black and white, as is the one by Rackham (*Mother Goose Rhymes*, 1969), while some are in full color, as is the one by Tenggren (1940). Some feature an old woman of ample proportions; Galdone's (1960) hefty Mother sports a fashionable bustle and gingham apron. Ward's illustration (Huber, 1965) depicts her as tall, while Lobel's (1968) version shows a compact dumpling of a woman. Even the evocation of time is different. In comparing two illustrations, one child felt that the one by deAngeli (1954) "... looks like it happened longer ago," than did the one by Rojankovsky (1942).

Children's Response to the Materials

Once the teacher has selected a variety of illustrations for a story or a poem to use with children and is ready to begin, how should the materials be used? How can the children be expected to respond?

Specific methods of presentation, types of questions used to stimulate observation and discussion, number of illustrations used, and length of the sessions must depend on the group. The teacher will vary these factors in sessions which will develop verbal skills of describing, leading to verbal literacy.

While using the illustrations for "The Owl and the Pussycat" with children, I discovered that kindergarten children without previous experience in structured oral discussion delighted in describing what they saw in illustrations for the nonsense verse by Lear. They were developing the first skill needed for verbal-visual literacy—that of describing. Since it was an initial experience, we began simply with one illustration and a few questions:

1. What do you see in the picture?
2. What colors has the artist used?
3. Where is this event taking place? How can you tell?
4. What things did the owl and pussycat take along?
5. Is the boat like any you have seen? How different is it?

Sixth graders, who had a variety of previous oral language experiences, were able to do quite well in evaluating as a result of close observation and practice in describing. A classroom teacher used three of the illustrations for *The Hare and the Tortoise* in doing a three-section unit on describing. The pictures were put up in the room for a few days so children could observe them. Children responded well to the challenge of seeing how closely they could discern what was in the pictures. One oral discussion session centered on describing, separately, each illustration. A second session centered on comparing two of the illustrations. During the third session children explained to their classmates their reasons for preferring, or *valuing*, one of the three illustrations. There was little verbal impoverishment apparent as these sixth graders discussed articulately the reasons for their choices.

Developing Typeface Awareness

Another technique for developing visual sensitivity which challenges children to put into words what they have perceived is a planned experience with typefaces. There is rich variety, with both subtle and readily apparent differences, available in print today. The novelty of studying something they have seldom thought about intrigues children. In the process, they sharpen visual perception skills and verbal abilities.

Two readily available sources for typeface samples exist:

1. Most magazines contain a wide variety of type samples, especially in advertisements.

The paper is outstanding.

We are proud of you.

Close inspection of typeface samples taken from magazine advertisements will reveal differences that aren't apparent at first glance.

2. Children's books also contain such variety, providing these can be enlarged by an opaque projector to make them big enough to use.[1]

Such a unit of study might begin with a trip to a local printer. A logical followup to this might be some brief investigation of the history and development of moveable type, appropriate to the grade level involved. Then the teacher introduces activities designed to increase visual sensitivity, presenting a variety of typefaces of quite different styles. (A single letter can be printed in a variety of ways, as shown below.) The problem for the children is to notice the physical characteristics of the typeface, and to describe in words the differences

1. A book containing a wide variety of typefaces is *Anatomy of Lettering* by Russell Laker (New York: Viking Press, 1966).

Material useful for the teacher is included in *The 26 Letters* by Oscar Ogg (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1971).

they have perceived. As children's ability to describe their perceptions develops, the differences in samples presented grow smaller. Interspersed with such teacher-initiated sessions, or perhaps following them, are experiences in which children search for samples of typefaces, and group them according to criteria they develop. Visual sophistication in detecting similarities and differences, and the ability to categorize grow as children experience a series of such activities. Along with this growth is the increasing power of translating into words the visual sensations they have experienced.

Summary

Visual and verbal literacy skills, so crucial because they are most frequently used by adults, are paradoxically among those least often developed in systematic fashion in the elementary school. Among the several reasons for this must be included the fact that component subskills of visual and verbal literacy are infrequently identified. Because all three subskills are crucial, children must be provided opportunities to *describe*, *compare*, and *value* orally. One effective way of encouraging children to do this is to use illustrations from children's literature; another approach is to involve them in typeface study. Both approaches offer many advantages: illustrations and typeface samples are easy to locate, plentiful, and of much interest to children. Children respond eagerly to these methods and in the process develop valuable visual and verbal literacy skills.

References

Asbjornsen, P. C., and Moe, J. E. *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1963.

_____. *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1957.

Blair, Susan. *Three Billy Goats Gruff*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.

Brown, Marcia. *Cinderella*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954.

_____. *Puss in Boots*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952.

Bruna, Dick. *Little Red Riding Hood*. Chicago: Follett, 1966.

Carruth, J., ed. *My Book of Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. New York: Maxton Pub. Co., 1962.

Contes de Perrault. Paris: Editions Garnier Freres, 1956.

Cooney, Barbara. *The Owl and the Pussy Cat*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1961.

d'Aulaire, Ingri, and Parin, Edgar. *Twenty-One Norwegian Folk Tales*. New York: Viking Press, 1969.

Debes, John L., and Williams, Clarence M. "The Power of Visuals." *Instructor*, (December 1974), pp. 32–38.

Evans, Robert. "A Glove Thrown Down." *Elementary English* (May 1967), pp. 523–527.

Fischer, Hans. *Puss in Boots*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959.

Fransecky, Roger B., and Debes, John L. *Visual Literacy: A Way to Learn—A Way to Teach*. Washington, D. C.: Association for Education Communication and Technology, 1972.

Galdone, Paul. *Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog*. New York: Whittlesey House, 1960.

Gant, Elizabeth, and Gant, Katherine. *Little Red Riding Hood*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1969.

Haviland, Virginia. *Favorite Fairy Tales Told in France*. Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1959.

———. *Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Italy*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965.

Hogrogian, Nonny. *The Renowned History of Little Red Riding Hood*. New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1967.

Huber, M. B. *Story and Verse for Children*. New York: Macmillan, 1965.

Hutchinson, ed., *Chimney Corner Stories*. New York: Minton, Balch and Co., 1925.

Johnson, A. E. (translator). *Perrault's Complete Fairy Tales*. New York: Mead and Co., 1961.

Kastner, Erich. *Puss in Boots*. New York: Julian Messner, 1957.

Lang, Andrew. *The Blue Fairy Book*. New York: David McKay, 1948.

———. *The Green Fairy Book*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949.

Lear, Edward. *The Owl and the Pussy Cat*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1961.

Lobel, Arnold. *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog*. New York: Bradbury Press, 1968.

Merrill, Jean, and Solbert, Ronni. *Red Riding Hood*. New York: Pantheon, 1968.

Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes. New York: Franklin Watts, 1969.

Mure, Eleanor. *The Story of the Three Bears*. New York: H. Z. Walck, 1967.

Palazzo, Tony. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1959.

Pincus, Harriet. *Little Red Riding Hood*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968.

Rockwell, Anne (ill.) *The Three Bears and Fifteen Other Stories*. New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1975.

Rojankovsky, F. *The Three Bears*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948.

Stewig, John Warren. *Exploring Language with Children*. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1974, p. 92.

Stobbs, William. *The Three Bears*. New York: Whittlesley House, 1965.

———. *Three Billy Goats Gruff*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.

Tenggren. *Mother Goose*. Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1940.

The Three Bears. Racine, Wisconsin: Whitman Pub. Co., 1955.

Bibliography

Alderson, Brian. *Looking at picture-books, 1973; an exhibition prepared by Brian Alderson and arranged by the National Book League*. Distributed in the United States by Children's Book Council, 1973.

Annotations in this exhibition catalogue are refreshing because they are critical, rather than simply descriptive. The author evaluates the books, not just telling what each includes. Though primarily English in focus, the large number of books also published in the United States make this a valuable resource. Books are arranged in categories, and a brief (2–3 paragraph) introduction precedes each category. Though the illustrations are small and black and white, the juxtaposition of several contrasting ones on the same page clarifies the text.

Applebee, Arthur N. *The Child's Concept of Story*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

An incisive study of the processes children use when they tell stories, reporting research data gathered from children ages two through seventeen. The author uses James Britton's analysis of different types of language as a structure for describing what children do when they compose a story. The spectator and participant roles are described, and illustrated by samples drawn from the large corpus of stories the research analyzed. Six types of structure in children's stories are identified, supported with further examples: heaps, sequences, primitive narratives, unfocused and focused chains, and narratives. Ways children progress through these are described. A complex book requiring careful study, this is well worth the effort for the understanding it offers of a complex process usually overlooked.

Bader, Barbara. *American Picturebooks from Noah's Ark to The Beast Within*. New York: Macmillan, 1976.

Generous size, clear illustrations in quantity, and an articulate text mark this as the definitive book on the subject. Bader writes in convincing fashion, sharing the results of years of study and a perceptive view. The book helps one see today's picture books in the light of historical antecedents, all too often inaccessible to anyone but scholars. Unlike many books of criticism, this is neither dry nor pedantic: for even the novice it makes engrossing reading.

Blishen, Edward (ed.). *The Thorny Paradise: Writers on Writing for Children.* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Kestrel Books, 1975.

Twenty-two essays by noted children's authors seem divided into (1) assertions that children's literature is a valid literary genre and writing for children is a respectable literary profession; and (2) extended analyses of the individual's sources of ideas, processes of writing, and other professional concerns. Among the most provocative are the essays by John Gordon and Joan Aiken.

Fisher, Margery. *Who's Who in Children's Books.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975.

If you don't know who Milo, Mowgli, or Mary Anne are, this reference work will tell you. Milo is from *The Phantom Tollbooth*, Mowgli from *The Jungle Book*, and Mary Anne from *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*. That type of knowledge is of itself of limited usefulness, but the related commentary for each entry makes interesting reading. The book is not limited to plot synopsi, but includes evaluative comments and the author's personal response to the materials.

Jan, Isabelle. *On Children's Literature.* New York: Schoken Books, 1974.

A noted French critic discusses various genres and shares her insights into didacticism, based on the belief that children's literature exists as a genre with special characteristics, has antecedents, and is continually evolving. Although she omits many writers who are considered important in the U.S., and includes others who are not generally deemed worthy of serious criticism, the book, written in awesomely articulate style, abounds in intellectual challenges.

Larkin, David. *The Fantastic Kingdom.* New York: Ballantine Books, 1974.

In beautifully clear, intriguingly colored full-page reproductions, the editor presents fourteen illustrators whose names are too often unknown, whose paintings are forgotten. All born in the last half of the nineteenth century, they created a unique world of fantasy, infused with elements of Art Nouveau. Despite that common element, there is remarkable diversity here, which will delight the student of children's book illustration.

Terry, Ann. *Children's Poetry Preferences: A National Survey of Children's Poetry Preferences.* Urbana: NCTE, 1974.

Despite the quantity of new realistic poetry, teachers continue to read traditional poems. The author set out to determine if this is one reason interest in poetry begins to decline about grade five. One chapter summarizes all the previous studies of children's preferences. Students in 4-6th grade were asked to listen to poetry on cassette tapes and respond. Haiku and free verse were among the least liked. Narrative poems and those with strong rhyme/rhythm were favorites. Liking a poem was strongly linked to understanding it: obscure imagery elicited negative response. Survey of teaching procedures revealed fifty percent of teachers taught less than nine poems a year. This is the most comprehensive survey of preference now available.

Townsend, John Rowe. *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1975.

The author deals with the entire array of genres now present in books for children. Among the topics is the presentation of minority groups. His comments on these, including the early integrationist books and the recent superb work by Virginia Hamilton, are particularly helpful. An extended analysis of changing presentations of parent-child relations is included, set against the earlier family stories of Enright and Estes. The rise of the highly idiosyncratic female heroine is described. See also this author's *A Sense of Story* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1971).

White, Mary Lou. *Children's Literature. Criticism and Response*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1976.

A diverse collection of twenty-seven articles drawn from several sources are grouped into four categories of criticism: psychological, sociological, archetypal, and structural. For each category the author provides description of the approach, an introduction to the articles and statements of the relation between them, and a follow-up section on ways of responding. These last activities are primarily to enhance adult readers' understanding, though some could be adapted for use with mature child readers.

The articles themselves range in publication date from 1932 to 1974 (one on Soviet children's literature and Chinese children's literature respectively). Many are of interest primarily to the serious scholar of children's literature, though all are of intrinsic interest for the light they shed on changing attitudes toward books. A final chapter (pp. 221–236) offers activities for enhancing children's understanding of ways books may be analyzed/responded to. This is a singularly important, carefully created book which should be read. Do not be misled by the consciously ugly cover—what is within is far more intriguing.

5 Reading Leads to Writing

Richard Kolczynski
Ball State University

Definitions of literacy often include the ability to write as well as to read. If we are interested in fully developed literacy, we must extend basic reading instruction to include ways to develop competencies in writing.

In this chapter, Richard Kolczynski describes an approach using tradebooks to motivate children to write. While some other books about composition incidentally refer to the use of literature as a motivation for writing, that approach is the major focus here.

After describing the general relationship between the literature program and composition experiences, the author talks specifically about literature as a model for writing. He also discusses techniques for reshaping children's compositions.

Teaching children to read and to write is probably paramount among the many goals of a quality education. To list the values of literacy would be to repeat the obvious. My intent, however, is to focus attention on reading a specific kind of material (the reading of literature), and on a specific value of such reading (as a point of departure for writing).

The value of quality literature for learning and experiencing appears obvious but is too often taken for granted.

> The student of human nature is nowadays too apt to forget that most of what we know about the mind of man is to be learnt from the writings not of scientists but of men of letters—the poets and historians, the novelists and the literary critics.
>
> Sir Cyril Burt

Literature has had a place in the schools from the beginnings of education, but the emphasis and the kinds of literary experiences have varied widely.

At this point, most educators agree that reading good literature and the experiences that should flow from such reading can no longer be

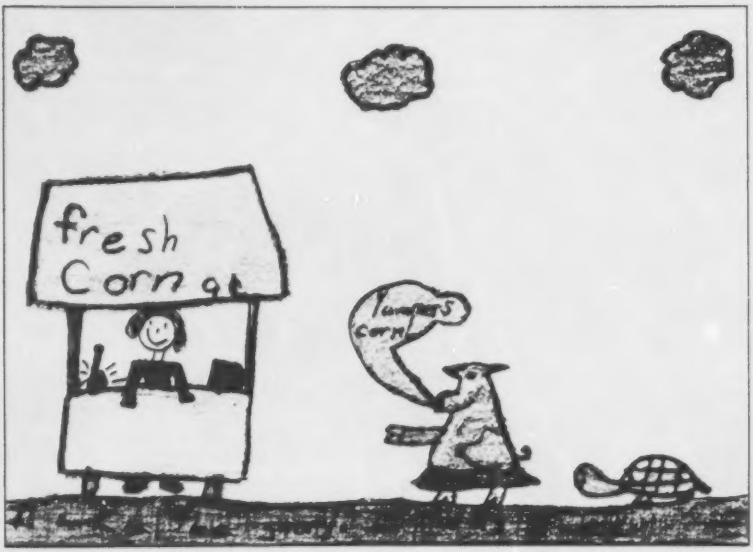
subsumed under a "reading" or "English" program. Attention is now being focused upon literature as an integral part of language arts which, in turn, can be integrated with the entire school program. "Books, stories and poems" [should not be used simply to] "fill *incidental* moments in the school lives of young children."

> If the teacher knows both children and their literature, she will be able to bring them together through the events of the day for many unifying and enriching moments. (Paige, 1969)

A good program, therefore, is a well-planned, continuing experience that not only encourages children to read but also guides them in developing interests, knowledge, skills, and appreciation needed to enjoy literature.

One of the greatest values of a literature program is that it serves as a source for a variety of creative endeavors. In addition to being inspired to paint, dance, sing or dramatize, children can be motivated to explore and expand their own capacity for personal writing.

It is not unusual for the same book to produce differing responses. After hearing the story *Yummers* by James Marshall (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1973) two second grade students expressed their reactions with crayon drawings.



But a third child wrote these comments:

Devon Yoder 2-D
Yummers
Emily ate a lot of food and she was fat. And the story made me hungry. I loved the story. I thought it was funny. It learned me a lessen.

> The theory that literature serves to supplement students' personal experiences is not new.
>
> The input of ideas and of expressive language must be a part of any children's program which seeks to develop the power to communicate in both spoken and written language. The input of ideas through literature is vital if children are going to have a reservoir of knowledge for their own creativity. (Hall, 1970, pp. 72–73)

Another writer states that reading not only stimulates children to think, but

> . . . it also helps improve writing style through hearing the vocabulary, sentence construction, grammar and syntactical arrangements, organization and approach used by other writers. (Black, 1971)

Literature as a Model for Writing

Just as children learn to speak and use their language by listening to those around them, they can also discover the values and applications of literature as an impetus for their own creative expression. Children cannot effectively tell or write about stories or books, however, until they are exposed to good models of literature. As Evertts (1966) suggests, "the quality of composition" [whether oral or written] "varies with the quality of input." The teacher, therefore, has the responsibility to provide time for a variety of literary experiences and to promote interest in and favorable attitudes toward fine literature. By listening to and reading good stories and books, children will develop a store of knowledge and experiences that will guide them as they discover written language as a means to express their own ideas.

The reactions of two second graders to Maurice Sendak's book, *Where the Wild Things Are* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) provide ample evidence that these children, though young, possessed a real insight into human needs. Both were able to convey their feelings in these spontaneous reactions, dictated to fourth grade students:

> Max's mother and father didn't know how to handle him. Sometimes he did bad things and only his friends in the jungle knew that he was good. It's nice to have good friends who know!
>
> Cindy, Grade 2

> If I was Max, I'd go back to the place with wild things. He's not gonna get his way at home anyway. Anyway, he needs some good friends.
>
> Jim, Grade 2

The most significant value of wide and continuous contact with literature is the development and refinement of children's sensitivity to language. Exposure to language, both oral and written, influences vocabulary development. Through reading, children also become aware of the functions of words, figurative expressions, and sentence patterns. As children are guided in their explorations of literature, they will become increasingly aware of the functional and creative attributes of language and they should be helped in their attempts to use language expressively. Jeanne Bendick's (1963) *A Fresh Look at Night* is a good example of writing that allows one to develop sensory images through descriptive language:

> A city full of lights and windows is like
> frozen fireworks on the Fourth of July.
>
> Rainy nights are like silk and satin.
> Snowy nights are like feathers and fur.

Other fine language images are included in *Night* by Ezra Jack Keats (New York: Atheneum, 1969). Children's use of language in responding to night as a motivation is also included in *A Celebration of Bees*, by Barbara Esbensen (Minneapolis: Winston Press, Inc., 1975). Such examples may be used to help children "see" the power of language to describe in vivid, sensory, colorful ways. Moffett (1968a, p. 125) states that "when children write, they read more, they become involved in language, they get caught up in cycles of giving and taking words that gather momentum and accelerate progress in both reading and writing."

Reading good literature also provides models for children to study and follow. As Huck (1976, p. 681) explains:

> It is essential that many examples of the literary form be presented and discussed in order that children understand its patterns and elements.

As children gain experience in identifying various forms of literature, they can begin to develop their own stories and poems. In addition to creating pictures with paint, collage, or crayon, children may be guided to respond to literature through various forms of writing. A child may choose the one that best conveys his or her own personal response to the literary selection.

The poem "Feeling Blue" and the letter which follows it are examples of individual responses.

Feeling Blue

Frog didn't feel well
I had the flu
We were sick and
We felt blue.

Frog got better while
Toad got blue
But I still was sick
I had the flu

Marggie, Grade 4

(written after reading "The Story" in *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, by Arnold Lobel)

Dear King and Queen,

You were very nice to a boy with many friends. It is good to have a lot of food. If you need help, I can help you have fun too.

Love,
Tommy

P.S. May I bring a friend?

Tommy, Grade 3

(written in response to Beatrice Schenk DeRegniers' *May I Bring a Friend?*)

Forms of writing which children might use in reacting to a story include:

- rewriting endings
- creative stories
- statement of personal reaction
- rewriting titles
- journals, diaries, logs
- letters
- newspaper articles
- unfinished stories
- commentary for films/filmstrips
- invitations, announcements

Attention to the elements of good literature (setting, plot, characterization, theme, and style) may help students to become aware that authors employ different styles, adapting language to express individual ideas and purpose for writing. Although it is important for teachers to be knowledgeable of the elements of literature, that structural information should not be forced upon children. Such learning is gradual and may be encouraged by careful questioning and by exploring models of good writing. To supplement the use of literature itself, such books as *Someday You'll Write* by Elizabeth Yates (1962) and the

First Book of Creative Writing by Julia C. Mahon (1968) are valuable in illustrating the art and techniques of good writing. Suggestions for making reports can be found in Sue R. Brandt's *How to Write a Report* (1968).

It is important to be aware of four points when working with children who are inexperienced writers:

First, teachers should not lose sight of the fact that most writing will consist of the child's own choice of subject matter, language, and style. Furthermore, authentic writing comes about only when the child has something to say for real reasons and when writing is an outgrowth of meaningful experiences (direct or vicarious).

Second, although children will benefit from having a variety of stimulants and experiences from which their own ideas may develop, teachers should not establish rigid frameworks, standards, or courses of study that may restrict creativity and produce artificial and structured writing lessons. Meaningful and expressive writing is seldom the product of classroom exercises.

It is essential that children be allowed ample time to read, to engage in prewriting activities—thinking, talking, planning, and sketching ideas—and to write and share their writing with others. An excellent way to provide a conducive atmosphere for reading and writing is to have a "Writer's Corner"[1] which may be combined with a "Literature Center." Such a center where children could come and go freely would include:

> *Materials*: books, stories, poems, pictures, idea cards, magazines, dictionaries, and other print and nonprint materials.
>
> *Supplies*: paper, pencils, pens, magic markers, boxes, tape, costumes, scissors, paste, and other craft items
>
> *Equipment*: records, record player, cassette and tapes, overhead projector, puppet theatre, and camera

Third, children and teachers should view good literature as models and stimulants for developing sensitivity to language and for generating new ideas. Teachers should not belabor technical aspects such as literary terminology, figurative language, and formal accuracy. Because a "writing program is based on literature," says Stewig (1975, p. 23), "does not mean that teachers should attempt to dissect what they read with the children." He goes on to say that the purpose of using literature as a basis for writing is "to draw out from children their reactions

1. Another explanation of this idea is included in *Language Experiences in Communication* by Roach Van Allen (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976, pp. 72–73). Many kinds of centers related to language competencies are included.

to what they read rather than consciously implant in their minds large amounts of cognitive information." Personal enjoyment should not be overlooked as a major purpose of reading literature.

Fourth, antiquated forms of book reporting that are not appropriate for children and do not adequately reflect the quality of reading experiences must be discarded. Most traditional book reports are inadequately prepared and do not reflect genuine, meaningful, and enjoyable encounters with literature. Students should be encouraged to share their reading in forms they can handle and at times that are appropriate. There are many alternative activities that encourage children to put their writing to use:

making books[2]	recording on tapes
choral reading	painting, drawing
storytelling	putting words to music
dramatizing	finger plays
making filmstrips	flannelboard reports
collages	rhythm activities
collections, exhibits	field trips
dioramas	models
puzzles	literature maps

It is the teacher's responsibility to create a receptive climate for participating in such activities.

Receiving and Reshaping

One author has suggested that "The way in which writing is received by the group when it is written may have more to do with encouraging the children to write than have the stimuli that are applied for this purpose" (Jones, 1969). Moffett (1968, pp. 192–194) agrees that the writer is influenced significantly by the responder(s). He contends that one reason for writing is to elicit certain reactions from a defined audience. Once a student completes a written product, therefore, it becomes important to identify a significant audience with whom the writing could be shared. Reactions to the composition and feedback offered to the writer should be provided in the form of audience reception and response.

Implications for the classroom are apparent. Students should be encouraged to write for the interest and enjoyment of others in addition

2. A useful resource is *Books for You to Make* by Susan Purdy (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1973).

to any personal writing they do for their own enjoyment. Writing of all kinds can be shared when the classroom environment is nonthreatening and informal. Although the teacher is obviously a significant adult audience, the students themselves are a more natural audience. "As children read each other's writing and see their own writing read by others they learn to see quality in their work, to care about what they produce, and to feel their work is important." (Blake, 1971)

Moffett (1968a, p. 269) believes that children should be encouraged to write for each other and to react to the writing of others in a discussion and workshop setting. This practice allows for cross-commentary, editing, and reshaping of writing while work is in progress or soon after it is completed. Students break into small groups to exchange papers, read them, and talk about improving and developing their work. Their comments and suggestions will be oral as they react spontaneously to each other's papers.

Role of the Teacher in a Workshop Situation

The role of the teacher in this type of workshop is clearly delineated:

First, as an interested reader, the teacher becomes an adult audience with whom writing is shared. At this point the teacher receives the child's writing and responds to the ideas and content in a sympathetic manner. The teacher encourages and motivates students to develop ideas and impressions in ways that appear appropriate to their purposes for writing and that achieve the desired effects on a given audience. In this role of an interested reader, the teacher should keep in mind that:

> Essentially a writer is seeking to communicate—an idea, a thought, a feeling, a piece of information, or a point of view. . . . No writer sets as his goal the writing of "correct" English, or the inclusion of someone's notion of the proper amount of punctuation, or the introduction of each paragraph with a topic sentence. (Petty, 1967, p. 82)

At this point one might wonder about several traditional "duties" of teachers in evaluating children's writing. What do we do about faulty constructions, misspelled words, incorrect punctuation, and instruction in the mechanics of writing?

If spontaneity is to be maintained, punctuation must sometimes be overlooked, particularly with novice authors.

Secondary to the teacher's role as an interested reader will be that of an editor who provides effective alternatives which may clarify or solve

problems encountered during the prewriting and/or writing stages. Although Moffett would see no need for writing comments on students' compositions, he does believe that the teacher could help students "to interpret their initially vague responses and to translate them into the technical features of the paper" (Moffett, 1968b, p. 196) that would help to achieve their goals for writing. He goes on to say that the teacher should be of assistance during the writing process by consulting, responding, and coaching. Assistance with specific writing problems would be handled with individuals when such help and advice is relevant and timely.

A third role of the teacher is to develop and expand students' abilities to respond to each other's writing and to offer suggestions for improving expression. If students were taught to teach each other, it would make possible "a lot more writing and a lot more response to the writing than a teacher could otherwise sponsor" (Moffett, 1968b, p. 196). Because one's peers are a natural audience, students can be led to

> . . . respond spontaneously to each other's writing and also make suggestions for changes, including but not dwelling on corrections of spelling and punctuation. . . .
>
> Of course, any teacher should have the right to remark on pupil writing, if only to encourage or appreciate, but . . . children should begin their careers thinking of the class as more the audience than the teacher. . . . (Moffett, 1968a, p. 126)

Perhaps the most important goal for teachers is to help children become independent and to view evaluation as a matter of self-appraisal. The teacher's ability to ask questions may be the key to achieving this goal. During and after careful observations of the writing process, the teacher should encourage students to think about their own writing by asking appropriate questions. Such questions should not seek specific "right" answers, but should aim to broaden or clarify the student's perception of the writing stimulus or the student's style of expression.

> . . . the purpose of this questioning is to develop habits of reflecting upon, thinking about, and reacting to written material. Each child will develop this ability at his or her own level. Some will become very adept at it; others will have less success. The questioning does not become an end in itself but rather a means of encouraging this reflective attitude toward writing. (Stewig, 1975, p. 223)

As children begin to see writing as an effective and satisfying means through which to communicate, they will find inner motivation to evaluate what they have written and will seek new forms of writing and more opportunities to read. In an ideal situation, students write for

each other and read each other's writing, thereby making each writing assignment a reading assignment.

Conclusion

Getting children to write well and to develop a continuing enjoyment of writing are major goals of most teachers. Because literature develops a sensitivity to language, provides models for good writing, and serves as a springboard for many creative endeavors, it is believed that one excellent way to develop active writers is to utilize the abundance of good literature as an impetus for personal writing. Since "reading (and especially reading literature) affects one's way of talking and one's choice of topics, changes the perceptions of reality, of others and of the self, and influences attitudes and behavior" (Stahl, 1975), then let reading lead to writing and writing lead to reading.

References

Benlick, Jeanne. *A Fresh Look at Night.* New York: F. Watts, 1963.

Blake, Howard E. "Written Composition in English Primary Schools," *Elementary English,* 48 (October 1971): 605–16.

Brandt, Sue R. *How to Write a Report.* New York: F. Watts, 1968.

Everts, Eldonna L. "Dinosaurs, Witches, and Anti-Aircraft: Primary Composition," *Elementary English,* 43 (February 1966): 109–14.

Hall, Mary Ann. *Teaching Reading as a Language Experience.* Columbus: C. E. Merrill, 1970.

Huck, Charlotte S. *Children's Literature in the Elementary School.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976.

Jones, Anthony. "Writing in the Primary and Middle School," *English in Education,* 3 (Autumn 1969): 57–61.

Koestler, Arthur. *The Act of Creation.* London: Pan, 1966.

Mahon, Julia C. *First Book of Creative Writing.* New York: F. Watts, 1968.

Moffett, James. *A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K–6: A Handbook for Teachers.* New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1968a.

———. *Teaching the Universe of Discourse.* New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1968b.

Paige, Marjorie L. "Building on Experiences in Literature," *Young Children,* 25 (December 1969): 85–88.

Petty, Walter T., and Bowen, Mary E. *Slithery Snakes and Other Aids to Children's Writing.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967.

Stahl, Abraham. "Creative Writers on the Effects of Reading," *Journal of Reading Behavior,* 7 (1975): 111–22.

Stewig, John Warren. *Read to Write.* New York: Hawthorn Books, 1975.

Yates, Elizabeth. *Someday You'll Write.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1962.

6 Reading Comprehension through Creative Dramatics

Mary Jett-Simpson
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

Mary Jett-Simpson suggests, in this final chapter, that teachers are not confined to illustrations, words, and writing in their efforts to develop literate children. Her alternative is an innovative method of using creative dramatics to measure comprehension.

Drama has usually occupied only a peripheral, rather than integral, place in the elementary curriculum.

Ms. Jett-Simpson stresses drama as an aid to comprehension by the students, and also focuses on the six ways teachers may use drama to assess students' understanding of a selection they have read. She gives several examples of literature which can be used and ways those stories can be dramatized most effectively. Following her example, more teachers may regularly include creative drama in their classrooms.

Traditionally, a determination of reading comprehension is elicited by questions in oral or written form. Certainly this method is direct and expedient. However, there are several problems if questioning is the only method of measuring comprehension. The problems stem from the teacher's phrasing of the questions and the child's ability to interpret the language in which the questions are phrased. Bormuth's (1970) research strongly supports the idea that the complexity of the syntax of a question affects the likelihood of the child making a correct response. Tuinman (1974) and Pyrczak (1972) have pointed out that many measures of reading comprehension include multiple choice items that could be answered without reading the material. Thus, the questions would not be dependent on comprehension of the passage itself. Most important is Guszak's (1968) work, which has shown that the greatest number of questions typically asked during discussions are literal or factual. Such questions do not allow children to demonstrate their depth of understanding and response to a story. In addition, questions tend to focus on small, isolated segments of a story rather than the story as a whole.

Two obvious solutions are: (1) to improve the teacher's ability to phrase questions for higher levels of comprehension and (2) to use question syntax in oral and written form which the child can comprehend.

Both of these solutions are important, viable, and should be implemented. However, there are other alternatives which accommodate the problems raised and offer greater variety and interest for a reading curriculum. One of these alternatives is creative drama.

Creative Drama in the Classroom

Interest in drama is not new; the techniques today grouped under this title were begun in rudimentary fashion by Colonel Francis Parker in the early years of this century. Many writers have described at length the principles, values, and outcomes of drama experiences for children (Stewig, 1972), although research to document these assertions is just beginning (Stewig, 1976).

Creative drama is seldom thought of as either a way of evoking or assessing reading comprehension. Rather, it is typically classified as something extra—for fun and creativity after the "real" work of the reading class is complete—the workbooks, the oral reading, and the answering of literal questions. Too often, creative drama is placed in the reading curriculum "if there is time."

Creative drama should *not* be relegated to an only-if-there's time position. It should be considered a major method for measuring reading comprehension.

The problems associated with questioning are minimized, if not eliminated, in creative drama. Complexity of question syntax is not a problem, for the most part, since the children create their own syntax in the dramatization of events in a story. Passage dependency ceases to be a problem because the children must attend to the facts of a story to make their interpretation through the drama process. In addition, there are definite advantages for comprehension in the creative dramatic process.

How does creative drama support and extend reading comprehension, and what are examples of specific activities based on children's books?

Aids Abstract Thinking

Creative drama supports comprehension by providing a concrete link to more abstract thinking. The concreteness of creative drama may be especially beneficial to children of seven to eleven years, whom Piaget

(1928) identified as members of a concrete operational stage of development. Many teachers have had experiences with children of these ages who were limited in their ability to give verbal explanations, but who could demonstrate what they meant. A frequent comment from such a child would be "I can't tell you, teacher, but I can show you what I mean."

Questions alone usually require children to stand outside the story as observers, but they are directly involved in creative drama. The constructive or building process and active involvement of creative drama ground children's interpretations in the concreteness of the physical world. They are not outsiders looking through a glass darkly, but rather insiders enmeshed in the full illumination of the story. Moffett (1973, p. 36) has stated that "they (the children) seem to be themselves by being something else."

Elephant Buttons by Noriko Ueno, and *Mary Alice: Operator #9* by Jeffrey Allen are both concrete, simple stories that can be easily dramatized. *Elephant Buttons*, a wordless picture book, begins with an illustration of an elephant with buttons on his belly. The following picture shows the buttons partially unbuttoned and a horse stepping out of the elephant. Of course, the horse has buttons on his belly, too. Each animal which emerges from the unbuttoning of the previous animal is smaller. After showing several pages of the picture story, a game of prediction which involves inferential comprehension can be implemented through pantomime. Children can act out an interpretation of the animal shown, then pretend to unbutton and step out as a different, smaller animal. The page can then be turned to see if their prediction matches the illustrator's choice. By beginning with the concrete illustrations of action in the story, the children can move to a level of abstraction by making predictions.

Mary Alice: Operator #9, the local, efficient telephone operator, isn't fully appreciated until she contracts a cold and goes home to rest. A number of animal substitutes bungle her job until Mary Alice returns to work. Dramatization of the story could be extended by having children think of additional animals in the village who could have been substitutes and the ensuing problems they would have had with the job. The children become the characters and in so doing, begin to extrapolate events and actions from the concrete representation of the story.

Facilitates Comprehension

While questioning strategies for comprehension tend to focus on fragments of a story and isolated bits of information, creative drama

can deal with a story as a whole. Although a story may be blocked into scenes or smaller parts, the parts are always related to the whole. This is the demand of a story. To be complete, character, plot, setting, and theme must be present and interrelated. Creative drama forces attention to these literary elements. Even when a particular character is the focus of dramatization as opposed to an entire story, the character cannot be dramatized without attention to plot. The events of the story involve the actions of the characters and the characters' actions are the events of the story. The setting, which is the background for the action, contributes to the tone or mood of the scene. The scene as a whole helps build the meaning of the story or its theme.

To illustrate how creative drama forces attention to literary elements that comprise the whole, consider the following. The scene to be dramatized is from an old favorite, *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White. Charlotte has promised to save Wilbur's life and has woven the phrase "Some Pig" in her web. One evening she calls a meeting of the barnyard animals in order to find another impressive word to write in her web to describe Wilbur. Participants in a creative dramatization of that meeting must demonstrate knowledge and interpretation of each character: Gander, Goose, Sheep, Lambs, Templeton the Rat, Charlotte, and Wilbur. A new element of the plot is unfolded in their meeting. A new word must be found and Templeton the Rat is nominated to scrounge for such a word on his daily trip to the garbage dump. How Templeton the Rat, a selfish do-for-himself character, is persuaded to accept responsibility represents one of the lesser themes in the story; that when the lives of people are linked, so too are their destinies. Most important, the scene illustrates the main theme of the book, the nature of Charlotte and Wilbur's friendship. As the plot unfolds through the characters' actions to reveal the theme, the setting also becomes important to the dramatization. To build her case of the importance of Templeton's trip to the dump, Charlotte makes a persuasive speech in which she paints a gloomy scene of an empty trough and no food supply for Templeton. To have character, without plot, without setting, without theme, would be highly unlikely in a dramatization of this scene. Through the acting in the creative dramatization, comprehension of these elements is demonstrated.

Demonstrates Interrelatedness of Elements

Because of the interrelatedness of literary elements and the response to a story as a whole which creative drama demands, an interesting phenomenon occurs. Such taxonomic levels of comprehension as those

identified by Barrett (1968) appear to happen almost simultaneously. For example, the active participation in the constructive process of creative drama requires children to identify the details of character, plot, and setting (Level 1: literal comprehension); to identify the sequence of events (Level 2: reorganization); to interpret the actions, feelings, and motivations of the characters in each scene and the story as a whole (Level 3: inferential comprehension); to make judgments about the worth of a character (Level 4: evaluation); and to identify with the characters (Level 5: appreciation). Obviously the depth and subtlety of comprehension demonstrated in the dramatization will vary according to individual differences among children.

Frog Goes to Dinner by Mercer Mayer is a delightful wordless picture book in which a frog hops out of a boy's pocket in a fancy restaurant and creates a series of scenes, ending in disaster. This action-packed story is a natural for children to dramatize as a slapstick comedy routine. Developing dialogue for the characters, blocking the scenes, and interpreting the behaviors of the characters directly involves students in multilevel comprehension and response to literary elements within an activity. This requires students to deal with the story as a whole. Of course there is also the added fun of solving the problem of how to include the frog as a character in the dramatization.

Demonstrates Social Interaction

The active constructive nature of creative drama may allow children to develop refinement in understanding of surface and subsurface characteristics of characters. This may parallel their own developmental growth in their social interactions.

Creative drama can assist the development of a child's thinking about his social environment. Piaget (1928) observed that the child's interpretation of people begins with surface manifestations, observable behaviors, and gradually moves to understanding of the psychological interior. That is, initial reasoning about people focuses on aspects available through direct perception, ignoring the covert processes. Flavell (1970) has described the elementary school years as the major developmental period for the child's ability to "people read," or understand their covert behavior (feelings, attitudes, and motivations). In the early stages of this developmental process, children are only able to identify that what they think may not coincide with what another person thinks. Later, they realize that different points of view are important because they make it possible to predict the feelings and motivations of others with some degree of accuracy. When they develop

this understanding, children can adjust their own behaviors accordingly. The child moves from observation of surface behaviors to observation and understanding of subsurface factors. This ability to interpret subsurface processes develops during the elementary school years, becoming more accurate and refined. We could, therefore, expect a child's comprehension of a character in a story to be best for suface or observable action and behaviors. Sensitivity for feelings and motivations should increase with age.

The developmental process described by Piaget and Flavell was observed in a study by this writer. Kindergarten, second, and fourth grade boys and girls were asked to tell a story for the wordless picture book *Frog Goes to Dinner* by Mayer. The Jett-Simpson System for Analyzing Verbalized Inference (1976), which is based on literary elements, was used to describe the storytelling performance of the children. All of the children made a greater number of inferences about character than about the other literary elements in the storytelling. Their major interest was character action or surface behaviors. Fourth graders made more inferences about the affective nature of characters or subsurface behaviors than kindergartners or second graders did. Since creative drama encourages character action and subsequent understanding of that action, it may assist children in understanding themselves as well as comprehending the motivations of others.

Several specific dramatization activities for helping children explore characters' surface and subsurface behaviors and their relationship follow: After reading Byrd Baylor's *Everybody Needs a Rock* (1975), each child could bring a favorite rock from home. Then, assuming the role of the rock, each tells his/her life story in a short soliloquy. Adults often forget the fascination and mystery a rock holds for children.

Older children would be challenged by dramatizing the "war" strategy meeting of the pushcart people in Jean Merrill's humorous book, *The Pushcart War* (1964). The plot involves the pushcart people in New York who are being overrun by the Mighty Mammoths (big trucks). In order to preserve their businesses, they must find a way to protect and defend themselves. Before reading the remainder of the book to the class, the teacher could have children assume roles of each of the pushcart people: Frank the Flower, Morris the Florist, Carlos, Maxie Hammerman, Mr. Jerusalem, Harry the Hot Dog, Old Anna, Papa Pertz, and Eddie Morony. The children could dramatize the scene in which the characters come together for their secret strategy meeting, and could also attempt to solve the problem from the various points of view of the characters.

Another book which helps children gain insights into point of view is Karla Kuskin's *Any Me I Want to Be** (1972). Kuskin's book is a collection of poems told from the point of view of something common to a child's environment, such as a kite, a mitten, a shoe. For example:

I'm up here.

MATERIAL REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Kite string.

After the teacher reads some of the poems to the class, the children could take turns selecting something familiar to them, then acting out and telling about life from the point of view of that object. The rest of the children in the classroom could try to guess what they are, making the dramatization a riddle game.

The Colliers' book, *My Brother Sam Is Dead*, a Newbery honor book, provides an opportunity to dramatize how events in the lives of characters change their feelings and attitudes. The setting of the story is the Revolutionary War. Members of an American family are on opposing sides: Tories vs. Patriots. Characters from the story (Mr. Meeker, Mrs. Meeker, Tim, Sam, General Reed, and Betsy) could be dramatized. There would be three scenes in which the characters tell how they felt about the war before it began, during the fighting, and afterward.

Corrects Misinterpretations

Creative drama may assist children in correcting inaccurate comprehension. My 1976 study (referred to previously in this chapter), demonstrated that inaccuracies in storytelling increased for low readers as they become older. When asked questions about the story they had seen and told for *Frog Goes to Dinner* by Mayer, kindergarten children and low readers made significantly more errors than older children and

*From ANY ME I WANT TO BE: Poems by Karla Kuskin. Copyright © 1972 by Karla Kuskin. Used with the permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

better readers. Creative drama and storytelling are similar in that both are active, constructive activities focusing on stories. Creative drama, which requires the active construction of a story with other children, might help children sort out their inaccurate thinking. For example, children readily question each other if they disagree about an interpretation of a character. To increase accuracy of interpretation, children could take turns acting out a character, then comparing the acting with the facts in a story or picture.

Enlarges Ability to Comprehend

The weaknesses of questioning as the only strategy for assessing comprehension have been discussed. However, children need to develop ability to answer questions in order to live within their school and home environments. For those children who are having difficulty answering questions in reading, participation in creative drama, which demands careful thought about the story elements, might help develop comprehension strategies which would assist them in answering questions in other contexts.

For example, the teacher might begin by showing the children the wordless picture book "Sly Foxe's Folly" from *Two More Moral Tales* by Mercer Mayer (1975). The pictures provide a concrete referent from which the dramatization could be developed. After the dramatization, the character, plot, setting, and theme of the story could be discussed. The theme could be expressed in the form of the classic moral statement. In this sequence, then, the children work the story out through creative dramatization, before discussing the story in the more traditional question-answer format. Such a procedure allows the dramatization to give support to question-answering.

In conclusion, creative drama offers opportunities for expressing comprehension which are not available in the standard questioning measure. The strengths of creative drama, in relationship to reading comprehension, suggest the merits of its inclusion in reading programs.

References

Allen, Jeffrey. *Mary Alice: Operator #9*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1975.

Barrett, T. "Taxonomy of Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Reading Comprehension." Included in the chapter by T. Clymer in *The Sixty-Seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Part 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

Baylor, Byrd. *Everybody Needs a Rock*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975.

Bormuth, J. *On the Theory of Achievement Test Items*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Collier, Christopher, and Collier, James. *My Brother Sam Is Dead*. New York: Four Winds, 1974.

Flavell, J. "Concept Development." *Carmichael's Manual of Child Psychology*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1970.

Guszak, F. "Teacher Questioning and Reading." *The Reading Teacher*, XXI (1968), pp. 227–234.

Jett-Simpson, Mary. "Children's Inferential Responses to a Wordless Picture Book: Development and Use of a Classification System for Verbalized Inference," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1976.

Kuskin, Karla. *Any Me I Want to Be*. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Merrill, Jean. *The Pushcart War*. New York: Young Scott, 1964.

Mayer, Mercer. *Frog Goes to Dinner*. New York: Dial Press, 1975.

———. *Two More Moral Tales*. New York: Dial Press, 1975.

Moffett, J. *A Student Centered Language Arts Curriculum*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

Piaget, Jean. *Judgment and Reasoning in the Child*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928.

Pyrczak, F. "Objective Evaluation of the Quality of Multiple Choice Items Designed to Measure Comprehension of Reading Passages." *Reading Research Quarterly*, VIII (1972), pp. 62–67.

Stewig, John Warren. "Creative Drama and Language Growth." *Elementary School Journal* (January 1972), pp. 176–188.

———. "What Do We Really Know about Creative Drama?" *Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference on the Language Arts*. (Fall, 1976). SUNY at Buffalo.

Tuinman, J. J. "Determining the Passage Dependency of Comprehension Questions in Five Major Tests." *Reading Research Quarterly*, IX (1973–74), pp. 206–223.

Ueno, Noriko. *Elephant Buttons*. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

White, E. B. *Charlotte's Web*. New York: Harper and Row, 1952.

Contributors

Helen Felsenthal

Ms. Felsenthal received her doctorate from the University of Iowa. She taught elementary classes and served as a school psychologist in San Diego before leaving to join the education department at Purdue University. Presently, she is Language Arts Program Coordinator of Research for Better Schools, in Philadelphia. In this capacity she works directly with students (grades 4–6) in testing reading/language arts materials, and conducts teacher training workshops.

Mary Jett-Simpson

Ms. Simpson is a member of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, where she does inservice work and demonstration teaching on reading, children's literature, and language arts topics. Among her recent publications are "Creative Approaches to Non-Verbal Filmstrips" (Weston Wood Study Guide, 1977); "The LAP Technique: The Benefits of Sharing Books," *Wisconsin State Reading Association Journal*, 22 (1977): 4–12; and "Language Development and Learning to Read," *Milwaukee Area Reading Council Journal*, 3 (1977): 7–11. She received her doctorate from the University of Washington.

Richard Kolczynski

Recipient of a University Research Grant and Creative Teaching Grant, Kolczynski is currently conducting workshops in language arts and reading at Ball State University. He also serves as a consultant to public school systems. He is a member of the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Language Acquisition of Young Children as well as the Committee on Written Composition in the Elementary School. He received his doctorate from Ohio State University.

Alden J. Moe

Moe received his doctorate from the University of Minnesota and is now Associate Professor of Education and Chairman of Elementary Education at Purdue University. He was formerly an elementary classroom teacher, a secondary remedial reading teacher, and a reading consultant. He has developed computer programs for the analysis of natural language. Currently, he directs a study investigating the relationship between oral language and reading. He is coauthor, with M. L. Woods, of *Analytical Reading Inventory* (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Pub. Co., 1977).

A. Barbara Pilon

Ms. Pilon is teaching at Worcester State College in Massachusetts. She is also on the editorial board of *The Gifted Child Quarterly* and is serving as secretary of the National Association for Gifted Children. Among her publications are: *Concrete Is Not Always Hard* (poetry), Xerox: 1972; "Dialects and Reading: Implications for Change," Elementary Language Arts Conference, 1975 (available on NCTE cassette, #71281); and *Teaching Language Arts Creatively in the Elementary Grades* (New York: John Wiley), 1978.

Sam L. Sebesta

After seven years of teaching elementary and junior high students in Illinois, Kansas, and California, Sebesta joined the faculty at the University of Washington, where he has taught teachers at the graduate and undergraduate levels for fifteen years. In addition, he is coauthor of the Singer/Random House *Literature Program* and author of the Allyn and Bacon *Pathfinder* series.

John Warren Stewig

An Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Stewig is familiar with the elementary classroom, having spent six years as a teacher of grades K–6. He served as Chair of the NCTE National Conference on Language Arts in the Elementary School held in Phoenix in 1977. He has published *Read to Write* (New York: Hawthorn Bks., 1975) and has prepared a tape recording (NCTE cassette #72636R) to supplement the book *Literature and Young Children* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1977), to which he was also a contributor.